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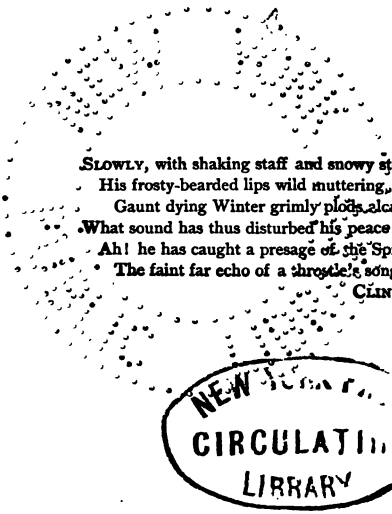

SLOWLY, with shaking staff and snowy stole,
His frosty-bearded lips wild muttering,
Gaunt dying Winter grimly plods along;
What sound has thus disturbed his peace of soul?
Ah! he has caught a presage of the Spring,
The faint far echo of a throstle's song!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.

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PREFACE.

WITH the lengthening days which distinguish the third month of winter from its predecessor, come ardent desires for spring, and longings for the time of birds and flowers. An adventurous swallow too early flying from the south, a vision of snowdrops in the snow, a day of April warmth lit by a slant February sun, are all hailed with pleasure as harbingers of a more gracious season on its northward way. It is this attitude of the mind in February which the editor has endeavored to illustrate in this number of *Through the Year with the Poets.* To many persons, however, the Valentine season is the central fact of the month; and the editor, recognizing this, has therefore included several of the best poems which have been inspired by this tender as well as fertile theme. One of these, which will be found on the forty-seventh page, now appears for the first time, having been written for this volume by Mr. Frank Dempster Sherman, — a name most pleasantly known among those of younger American poets. Mr. Clinton Scollard's graceful lines upon the title-page were written for their present niche; and "February," by Mrs. Jane G. Austin,

is also an original contribution to the book. "The February Hush," by Col. T. W. Higginson, though written some years ago, is now first printed by the kind permission of the author.

The editor again acknowledges the many favors received from various authors in the course of his work, and the publishers express their thanks to Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Co.; Chas. Scribner's Sons; J. B. Lippincott Co.; Cupples, Upham & Co.; Ticknor & Co.; Lee & Shepard; Roberts Brothers; and the Century Company, for permission to include the several poems of which they control the copyright; and also to Miss Emily C. Weeks for the use of two poems by her brother, the late Robert Kelley Weeks; and Mr. Parke Godwin for the use of two poems by Mr. Bryant.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., January 14, 1886.

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Born in Horsham, Surrey, England, August 4, 1792.
Drowned in the Bay of Spezzia, Italy, July 8, 1822.

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Born in Peekskill, New York, May, 1860.

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Born in Boston, Massachusetts, April 4, 1862.

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Born in London, England, *circa* 1553.
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Born in Reydon Hall, Suffolk, England, July 19, 1796.
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Born in London, England, April 5, 1837.

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Born in London, England, 1828.
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Born in Salem, Massachusetts, August 28, 1813.
Died in Salem, Massachusetts, May 8, 1880.

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Born in Poole, Dorsetshire, England, 1840.

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Died in Rydal Mount, Westmoreland, England, April 23, 1850.

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FEBRUARY.

SPRING IN WINTER.

For me there is no rarer thing
Than, while the winter's lingering,
To taste the blessedness of spring.

Were this the spring, I now should sigh
That aught were spent; — but rich am I!
Untouched spring's golden sum doth lie.

CHARLOTTE FISKE BATES.

FEBRUARY.

THE WINTER SLEEP.

When snow began she tried to make
No noise, — was frugal in her mirth;
She feared her childish romps might break
The wintry slumber of the Earth.

When roofs shook down the thawing snow,
And snowdrops peeped, — what joyous cries!
Had not dear Earth begun to throw
The clothes off, and to open eyes?

But when once more the snow came down,
And hoar-frost whitened every pane,
Her brows were puckered in a frown,
The change perplexed her little brain.

She thought and thought how this might be;
At last, "Oh my, papa!" she cried;
"We thought she was awake, — but she
Has only turned upon her side!"

WILLIAM CANTON.

FEBRUARY.

I AM lustration; and the sea is mine!
I wash the sands and headlands with my tide;
My brow is crowned with branches of the pine;
Before my chariot-wheels the fishes glide.
By me all things unclean are purified,
By me the souls of men washed white again;
E'en the unlovely tombs of those who died
Without a dirge, I cleanse from every stain.

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.
The Poet's Calendar.

ON OBSERVING A BLOSSOM ON THE FIRST OF FEBRUARY.

SWEET Flower! that peeping from thy russet stem
Unfoldest timidly, (for in strange sort
This dark, frieze-coated, hoarse, teeth-chattering month
Hath borrowed Zephyr's voice, and gazed upon thee
With blue voluptuous eye) alas, poor flower!
These are but flatteries of the faithless year.
Perchance, escaped its unknown polar cave,
E'en now the keen North East is on its way.

. . . . . .

Shall I compare thee to poor Poland's hope,
Bright flower of Hope killed in the opening bud?
Farewell, sweet blossom! better fate be thine

And mock my boding! Dim similitudes
Weaving in moral strains, I've stolen one hour
From anxious self, life's cruel taskmaster!
And the warm wooings of this sunny day
Tremble along my frame, and harmonize
The attempered organ, that even saddest thoughts
Mix with some sweet sensations, like harsh tunes
Played deftly on a soft-toned instrument.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE.

CANDLEMAS.

LIKE some immortal heathen thing,
All fresh with bloom, with odor sweet,
With brook and bird and breeze in tune,
The beautiful bright earth of June
Moves to the fullness of her noon,
While serving sunbeams round her fling
The purple violets as they fleet.

But when the winter's feathery rime
Plumes every leaf and spray,
And the deep skies about her close,
With morning's saffron, evening's rose,
Sparkling along her stainless snows,
So some great spirit, done with time,
Takes into space its white-winged way.

MRS HARRIET ELIZABETH [PRESCOTT] SPOFFORD.

WINTER.

O WINTER! thou art not that haggard Lear,
With stormy beard and countenance of woe,
Raving amain, or dumbly crouching low,
In hoary desolation mocked with fear.
To me thou art the white queen of the year,
A stately virgin in her robes of snow,
With royal lilies crowned, and all aglow
With holy charms and gems celestial clear.
Nor dost thou come in barren majesty,
Thou hast thy dower of sunbeams thrice refined;
Nor songless, but with cheerful minstrelsy
Rung from the singing harp-strings of the wind;
And ah, with such sweet dreams, — such visions bright,
Of flowers, and birds, and love's divine delight!

OBADIAH CORNELIUS AURINGER.
In the Century Magazine.

FEBRUARY.

. . FEBRUARY, a form
Pale-vestured, wildly fair, —
One of the North Wind's daughters,
With icicles in her hair.

EDGAR FAWCETT.
The Masque of Months.

IN WINTER.

AND then the snows came, and the squirrel slept
Within the upper chambers of the oak;
And through the night the watchful rabbit leapt,
And the wild fox within his den awoke,
The darkness buttoned round him like a cloak,
And pausing, listened for the crowing cock;
Afar the wolf's howl through the forest broke,
And the brusque owl sat hooting on the rock,
And preening the feathers of his antique frock.

JAMES NEWTON MATTHEWS.

A GLEE FOR WINTER.

HENCE, rude Winter! crabbed old fellow,
Never merry, never mellow!
Well-a-day! in rain and snow
What will keep one's heart aglow?
Groups of kinsmen, old and young,
Oldest they old friends among!
Groups of friends, so old and true,
That they seem our kinsmen too!
These all merry all together,
Charm away chill Winter weather!

What will kill this dull old fellow?
Ale that's bright, and wine that's mellow!

Dear old songs forever new;
Sometimes love, and laughter too;
Pleasant wit, and harmless fun,
And a dance when day is done!
Music-friends so true and tried,
Whispered love by warm fireside,
Mirth at all times all together,
Make sweet May of Winter weather!

ALFRED DOMETT.

FEBRUARY.

As one who ere his manly frame be knit,
Meets a death-angel on its wingéd way,
Who grips him in his hand as if to slay,
And till his wasted limbs are all unfit
To climb the steep world, will not set him quit,
The spring-child fares, when winter, whose grim day
Is well-nigh done, descries him for its prey.
The new blade withers, by its anger smit;
The sap recoils. But youth itself retrieves.
The sallow cheek grows clear; the blue eye cleaves
Its filmy prison; the pulse, erewhile so frail,
Leaps high. So now, in snowdrops pure and pale
Breaks the sere grass; the violet rends her veil;
In green or crimson buds the tree's heart heaves.

HENRY G. HEWLETT.
An English Year.

WINTER.

O MY roses, lying underneath the snow!
Do you still remember summer's warmth and glow?
Do you thrill, remembering how your blushes burned
When the Day-god on you ardent glances turned?

Great tree, wildly stretching bare arms up to heaven,
Do you think how softly, on some warm June even,
All your young leaves whispered, all your birds sang low,
As with rhythmic motion boughs swayed to and fro?

River, lying whitely in a frozen sleep,
Know you how your pulses used to throb and leap?
How you danced and sparkled on your happy way,
In the summer mornings when the world was gay?

Dear Earth, dumbly waiting God's appointed time,
Are you faint with longing for the voice sublime?
Wrapped in stony silence, does your great heart beat,
Listening in the darkness for the coming of His feet?

MRS. JULIA CAROLINE [RIPLEY] DORR.

A WINTER EVENING.

How pale and weak becomes the lamp of day,
With oil and wick far spent and burning low,
With glory flickering in the yellow ray,
And dying on the peaceful bed of snow!

J. HAZARD HARTZELL.

FEBRUARY.

AROUND, above the world of snow
The light-heeled breezes breathe and blow;
Now here, now there, they whirl the flakes,
And whistle through the sun-dried brakes,
Then, growing faint, in silence fall
Against the keyhole in the hall.

Then dusky twilight spreads around,
The last soft snowflake seeks the ground,
And through unshaded window-panes
The lamp-rays strike across the plains,
While now and then a shadow tall
Is thrown upon the white washed wall.

The hoar-frost crackles on the trees,
The rattling brook begins to freeze,
The well-sweep glistens in the light
As if with dust of diamonds bright;
And speeding o'er the crusted snow
A few swift-footed rabbits go.

Then the night-silence, long and deep,
When weary eyes close fast in sleep;
The hush of Nature's breath, until
The cock crows loud upon the hill;
And shortly through the eastern haze
The red sun sets the sky ablaze.

JAMES BERRY BENSEL

A WINTER HYMN.

O WEARY winds! O winds that wail!
  O'er desert fiel 's and ice-locked rills!
O heavens that brood so cold and pale
  Above the frozen norland hills!

Nature is like some sorrowing soul,
  Robed in a garb of dreariest woe;
She cannot see her vernal goal
  Through ghostly veils of mist and snow;

Her pulse beats low; through all her veins
  Scarce can the sluggish life-blood start;
What feeble, faltering heat sustains
  The half-numbed forces of her heart!

Above, despondent eyes she lifts,
  To view the sun-ray's dubious birth;
Beneath she marks the storm-piled drifts
  About a waste bewildering earth!

Ah, stricken Mother! hast thou lost
  All memory of the germs that rest
Untouched by tempest, rain, or frost,
  Shrined in thine own immortal breast?

Bend, bend thine ear; yea, bend and hear,
  Despite the winds' and woodlands' strife,
Deep in earth's bosom, faint and clear,
  The far-off murmurous hints of life:—

The sound of waves in whispering flow;
Of seeds that stir in dreams of light,
Whose sweetness mocks the shrouded snow,
Whose radiance smiles at death and night;

So, Christian spirit! wrapt in grief,
Beneath *thy* misery's frozen sod,
Love works, to burst in flower and leaf,
On some fair spring-dawn fresh from God!

PAUL HAMILTON HAYNE.

A WINTER SCENE IN NEW HAMPSHIRE.

BLUE starry skies; hills dreaming in their snows,
Their silent whiteness high against the west;
The crescent moon along their silver crest
A golden flood of blending beauty throws.
Beneath, the leafless forests grim repose,
Where cold and dreary shadows brooding rest,
Like melancholy spirits that infest
The lonely scenes of their mysterious woes.
Nearer, a rough, untraveled road, where stands
A log-built cabin, from whose heavy panes
A flickering light streams o'er the neighboring lands.
Close by, a tree where not a leaf remains,
Stretching aloft his naked, frosty hands;
And over all a solemn silence reigns.

ERNEST WARBURTON SHURTLEFF.

A WINTER DAY.

A WINTER day! the feather-silent snow
Thickens the air with strange delight, and lays
A fairy carpet on the barren lea.
No sun, yet all around that inward light
Which is in purity, — a soft moonshine,
The silvery dimness of a happy dream.
How beautiful, afar on moorland ways,
Bosomed by mountains, darkened by huge glens
(Where the lone altar, raised by Druid hands,
Stands like a mournful phantom), hidden clouds
Let fall soft beauty, till each green fir branch
Is plumed and tasselled, till each heather stalk
Is delicately fringed! The sycamores,
Through all their mystical entanglement
Of boughs, are draped with silver. All the green
Of sweet leaves playing with the subtile air
In dainty murmuring, the obstinate drone
Of limber bees that in the monkshood bells
House diligent, the imperishable glow
Of summer sunshine never more confessed
The harmony of nature, the divine,
Diffusive spirit of the beautiful.
Out in the snowy dimness, half revealed,
Like ghosts in glimpsing moonshine, wildly run
The children in bewildering delight.
There is a living glory in the air, —
A glory in the hushed air, in the soul
A palpitating wonder hushed in awe.

Softly — with delicate softness — as the light
Quickens in the undawned east, and silently —
With definite silence — as the stealing dawn
Dapples the floating clouds, slow fall, slow fall,
With indecisive motion eddying down,
The white-winged flakes, — calm as the sleep of sound,
Dim as a dream.

DAVID GRAY.
The Luggie.

A DAY IN FEBRUARY.

. . . . . .

A BITTER day that early sank
Behind a purple-frosty bank
Of vapor, leaving night forlorn.

The time admits not flowers or leaves
To deck the banquet. Fiercely flies
The blast of North and East, and ice
Makes daggers at the sharpened eaves,

And bristles all the brakes and thorns
To yon hard crescent, as she hangs
Above the wood which grides and clangs
Its leafless ribs and iron horns

Together, in the drifts that pass
To darken on the rolling brine
That breaks the coast.

ALFRED TENNYSON.
In Memoriam.

THE WIDOW BIRD.

A WIDOW bird sate mourning for her love
  Upon a wintry bough;
The frozen wind crept on above,
  The freezing stream below.

There was no leaf upon the forest bare,
  No flower upon the ground,
And little motion in the air
  Except the mill-wheel's sound.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

THE FROZEN CASCADE.

(THE BRIDE OF THE ROCK.)

IN beauty perfected, with lavish grace,
She casts herself about his rugged form,
With all her vesture on, of snowy white,
Nor left one pendant out, one dropping pearl.
Could she be fairer? Through her silver veins
The warm sun searches, as for some weak spot,
But with a pride refined, she smileth back;—
"I gave myself in beauty to this Rock;
Ancient he is, and reverend and strong;
And I will fringe him with my snowy arms,
And lay my white cheek on his dark gray brow,
Nor ever melt for all thy beaming eyes!"

SUSAN LOUISA HIGGINSON.

THE PATH THROUGH THE SNOW.

BARE and sunshiny, bright and bleak,
Rounded cold as a dead maid's cheek,
Folded white as a sinner's shroud,
Or wandering angel's robes of cloud.
Well I know, well I know
Over the fields the path through the snow.

Narrow and rough it lies between
Wastes where the wind sweeps, biting keen:
Every step of the slippery road
Marks where some weary foot has trod.
Who'll go, who'll go
After the rest on the path through the snow?

They who would tread it must walk alone,
Silent and steadfast, — one by one:
Dearest to dearest can only say,
"My heart! I'll follow thee all the way,
As we go, as we go,
Each after each on this path through the snow."

It may be under that western haze
Lurks the omen of brighter days;
That each sentinel tree is quivering
Deep at its core with the sap of spring,
And while we go, while we go,
Green grass-blades pierce through the glittering snow.

It may be the unknown path will tend
Never to any earthly end,
Die with the dying day obscure,
And never lead to a human door:
That none know who did go
Patiently once on this path through the snow.

No matter, no matter! the path shines plain;
These pure snow-crystals will deaden pain;
Above, like stars in the deep blue dark,
Eyes that love us look down and mark.
Let us go, let us go,
Whither heaven leads in the path through the snow.

MRS. DINAH MARIA [MULOCK] CRAIK.

GOLD-EYED AS THE SHORE-FLOWER.

. . . GOLD-EYED as the shore-flower shelterless
Whereon the sharp-breathed sea blows bitterness,
A storm-star that the seafarers of love
Strain their wind-wearied eyes for glimpses of,
Shoots keen through February's grey frost and damp
The lamp-like star of Hero for a lamp;
The star that Marlowe sang into our skies
With mouth of gold, and morning in his eyes.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE.
Tristram and Iseult.

FEBRUARY.

. . . CAME cold February, sitting
In an old wagon, for he could not ride,
Drawn of two fishes, for the season fitting,
Which through the flood before did softly slide
And swim away: yet had he by his side
His plough and harness fit to till the ground,
And tools to prune the trees, before the pride
Of hasting Prime did make them bourgeon round.

EDMUND SPENSER.
The Faerie Queene.

WINTER SUNSET.

I SAW a cloud at set of sun
  Exceeding white and fair,
High over every other one,
  And poised in purer air;

Like one that follows, forward bent,
  With arms outspread before,
Into the splendid west he went
  Just as the day was o'er;

I saw him turn to rosy red,
  I saw him turn to fire,
I saw him burn away, and said
  This one had his desire!

ROBERT KELLEY WEEKS.

SNOW ON THE MOORS.

(FEBRUARY.)

O'ER the wide waste of barren, bloomless moors,
Whereon not yet the purple heather bells
Yield honey-spoil unto the roving bee,
Falls thick and wide the winter snow.
Long, long ago, the pale blue harebells died;
The golden broom her petals one by one
Dropped 'mid the sere brown fern; and all the wealth
Of sweet wild flowers that make bright and fair
The fells in autumn, withered lie and dead
Beneath the wintry blast.
The shepherd seeks,
Hardy and weather-seasoned though he be,
The shelter of his cot; his bonnet blue
Scarce keeps from off his scanty silver hairs
The pelting snowstorm; crouch the shivering ewes
With their new-yeaned and pretty bléating lambs,
'Neath the furze-covered shed.
Keen, keen, and cold,
The north wind whistles o'er the bleak hillside,
As, chill and gray, the gloaming closes in;
And ceaseless flutter from the leaden sky
The feathering flakes, till not a single bush,
Or tuft or hillock, through its covering shows,
But still and white and silent all around,
The landscape lies beneath a shroud of snow.

A. H. BALDWIN.

I WENT TO LOOK FOR ROSES.

I WENT to look for roses
  When snow was on the ground,
Alas, a withered thorn-bush
  Was all the flowers I found!

I thought of summer blossoms
  Alight with dews of morn,
And down I sate me weeping
  Beside the barren thorn.

Out spake a grey-haired neighbor,
  "O madness! not to know
The time of living roses
  Is not the time of snow."

Fie on such foolish comfort!
  It never dried one tear;
I am weeping for my roses
  Because they are not here.

MENELLA BUTE SMEDLEY.

SKATING.

I CHASED the maid with rapid feet,
  Where ice and sunbeam quiver;
But still beyond me, shyly fleet,
  She flashed far down the river.

Sometimes, blown backward in the chase,
With balmy, soft caresses,
I felt across my glowing face
The waft of perfumed tresses.

Sometimes a glance she shot behind,
O'er graceful shoulders turning
A cheek whose tints the eager wind
Had set like sunrise burning.

Then, in a sudden onward glide,
She rushed with even motion,
As a long wave the restless tide
Drives shoreward fast from ocean;

And swift as some winged creature sped
Far down the shining river,
Until the shining form that fled
I dreamed might fly forever.

PAUL HAMILTON HAYNE.

WINTER TWILIGHT.

No summer sunset afterglow
Can match the soft rose of the snow
Upon the pure-browed hill:
Blue shadows fill the dells below,
Sweet airs from fields of silence flow,
And earth and sky are still.

Between the outer deeps of night
And this low vale, the lingering light
  Builds of the evening mist
High walls of glory fair and far;
And in the glory shines a star
  Through trembling amethyst.

O vale of snow! the world of thought,
The spirit-realm wherein are wrought
  The dreams that teach us what we are,
Is brightened by a nameless light
That warms the peaceful heart to-night
  And throbs beyond the evening star.

O human kind, why will ye seek
The language of the skies to speak?
  Day unto day doth utter speech
That through the silence of the stars,
Through life's mysterious prison-bars,
  Down to the listening soul can reach.

ANNA BOYNTON AVERILL.

FEBRUARY.

NOON, — and the north-west sweeps the empty road,
The rain-washed fields from hedge to hedge are bare;
Beneath the leafless elms some hind's abode
Looks small and void, and no smoke meets the air
From its poor hearth: one lonely rook doth dare

The gale, and beats above the unseen corn,
Then turns, and whirling down the wind is borne.

Shall it not hap that on some dawn of May
Thou shalt awake, and, thinking of days dead,
See nothing clear but this same dreary day,
Of all the days that have passed o'er thine head?
Shalt thou not wonder, looking from thy bed,
Through green leaves on the windless east a-fire,
That this day too thine heart doth still desire?

Shalt thou not wonder that it liveth yet,
The useless hope, the useless craving pain,
That made thy face, that lonely noontide, wet
With more than beating of the chilly rain?
Shalt thou not hope for joy new born again,
Since no grief ever born can ever die
Through changeless change of seasons passing by?

WILLIAM MORRIS.
The Earthly Paradise.

WINTER WINDS.

O WINTER winds, your mournful roar
Is burden of the song I sing;
An everlasting dirge ye pour,
A restless pain that beats the door
Of heaven with its wounded wing.

Grief has no faith; the common woe
That sees a future hope unfold,

Draws comfort thence; but as ye blow,
O winter winds, a grief I know
That cannot, would not be consoled.

Ye wail o'er earth left desolate,
O'er beauty stricken with decay;
Ye howl behind the path of fate,
Deaf to the voice that bids you wait,
Ye cry for what has passed away.

And I who stand with drooping eyes,
What heart have I to rise and greet
The beckoning hopes, that dimly rise,
While all I loved and trusted lies
In ashes at my faltering feet?

O winter winds, add moan to moan!
For though ye give me no relief,
Ye sound a fitting undertone,
A dreary note whose heavy drone
Keeps measure with my shriller grief.

GEORGE HENRY BOKER.

SUNNY DAYS IN WINTER.

SUMMER is a glorious season,
Warm and bright and pleasant;
But the past is not a reason
To despise the present;

So, while health can climb the mountain,
And the log lights up the hall,
There are sunny days in winter, after all!

Spring no doubt hath faded from us,
Maiden-like in charms;
Summer, too, with all her promise,
Perished in our arms:
But the memory of the vanished
Whom our hearts recall,
Maketh sunny days in winter, after all!

. . . . . .

Sunny hours in every season
Wait the innocent;
Those who taste with love and reason
What their God hath sent;
Those who neither soar too highly,
Nor too lowly fall,
Feel the sunny days of winter, after all!

Then, although our darling treasures
Vanish from the heart;
Then, although our once-loved pleasures
One by one depart;
Though the tomb looms in the distance,
And the mourning pall,
There is sunshine, and no winter, after all!

DENIS FLORENCE MACARTHY.

THE SNOW-SHOWER.

STAND here by my side and turn, I pray,
On the lake below thy gentle eyes;
The clouds hang over it, heavy and gray,
And dark and silent the water lies;
And out of that frozen mist the snow
In wavering flakes begins to flow;
Flake after flake
They sink in the dark and silent lake.

See how in a living swarm they come
From the chambers beyond that misty veil;
Some hover awhile in air, and some
Rush prone from the sky like summer hail.
All, dropping swiftly or settling slow,
Meet, and are still in the depths below;
Flake after flake
Dissolved in the dark and silent lake.

Here delicate snow-stars, out of the cloud,
Come floating downward in airy play,
Like spangles dropped from the glistening crowd
That whiten by night the milky way;
There broader and burlier masses fall;
The sullen water buries them all —
Flake after flake —
All drowned in the dark and silent lake.

And some, as on tender wings they glide
From their chilly birth-cloud, dim and gray,

Are joined in their fall, and, side by side,
Come clinging along their unsteady way;
As friend with friend, or husband with wife,
Makes hand in hand the passage of life;
Each mated flake
Soon sinks in the dark and silent lake.

Lo! while we are gazing, in swifter haste
Stream down the snows, till the air is white,
As, myriads by myriads madly chased,
They fling themselves from their shadowy height.
The fair, frail creatures of middle sky,
What speed they make, with their grave so nigh;
Flake after flake,
To lie in the dark and silent lake!

I see in thy gentle eyes a tear;
They turn to me in sorrowful thought;
Thou thinkest of friends, the good and dear,
Who were for a time, and now are not;
Like these fair children of cloud and frost,
That glisten a moment and then are lost,
Flake after flake,
All lost in the dark and silent lake.

Yet look again, for the clouds divide;
A gleam of blue on the water lies;
And far away, on the mountain-side,
A sunbeam falls from the opening skies,

But the hurrying host that flew between
The cloud and the water, no more is seen;
Flake after flake,
At rest in the dark and silent lake.

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

SLEEP, BABY MINE.

(RONDEAU.)

SLEEP, baby mine. The failing light is low,
The witch-elms toss their branches to and fro;
And howling winds sing baby's lullaby.
Move, shadows, move, and grey frost-clouds go by,
My baby sleeps, whatever winds may blow.

Sleep, baby mine; while he, who loves us so,
Is daring all the bitter, drifting snow
Across the moorlands where the great winds cry.
Sleep, baby mine!

Within, — the crackling wood fire's ruddy glow
Warms each wee hand, and curlèd roseleaf toe.
Without, — the blinding, biting storm mounts high,
And barbèd snowflakes scatter down the sky.
God send thy father ere the darkness grow!
Sleep, baby mine!

WILLIAM WILSEY MARTIN.

THE AIR IS WHITE.

(VILLANELLE.)

THE air is white with snowflakes clinging;
Between the gusts that come and go,
Methinks I hear the woodlark singing;

Methinks I see the primrose springing
On many a bank and hedge, although
The air is white with snowflakes clinging.

Surely, the hands of Spring are flinging
Woodscents to all the winds that blow;
Methinks I hear the woodlark singing;

Methinks I see the swallow winging
Across the woodlands sad with snow;
The air is white with snowflakes clinging.

Was that the cuckoo's woodchime swinging?
Was that the linnet fluting low?
Methinks I hear the woodlark singing.

Or can it be the breeze is bringing
The breath of violets? — Ah no!
The air is white with snowflakes clinging.

It is my lady's voice that's stringing
Its beads of gold to song, — and so
Methinks I hear the woodlark singing.

The violets I see upspringing
  Are in my lady's eyes, I trow:
The air is white with snowflakes clinging.

Dear, while thy tender tones are ringing,
  Even amidst the winter's woe
The air is white with snowflakes clinging,
Methinks I hear the woodlark singing.

JOHN PAYNE.

THE FEBRUARY HUSH.

SNOW o'er the darkening moorlands;
  Flakes fill the quiet air;
Drifts in the forest hollows
  And a soft mask everywhere.

The nearest twig on the pine-tree
  Looks blue through the whitening sky,
And the clinging beech-leaves rustle
  Though never a wind goes by.

But there's red on the wildrose berries
  And red in the lovely glow
On the cheeks of the child beside me
  That once were pale, like snow.

THOMAS WENTWORTH HIGGINSON.

WINTER: AN ELEGY.

I LOOK from my lonely window
  Over the snowy plain;
A hearse and a handful of mourners
  Are creeping through the rain!
The flowers are dead and departed,
  The memory of summer is gone,
Song from the lark, and the lark from heaven,
                And the day drags on.

My soul looks out from its grating,
  And sees without a sigh
The funeral train of youthful hopes
  Mournfully pass by!
Health, and the joy of existence,
  And the faiths that were wont to be,
And love, and dead and departing, —
                It's winter with me.

J. LOGIE ROBERTSON.

SNOW-BIRDS.

WITHOUT the snow, no snow-birds,
  And without their throats to sing,
How could we waste the winter,
  Or have a hope of spring?

GEORGE WASHINGTON WRIGHT HOUGHTON.

ON THE CHOICE OF WEATHER.

SHALL I desire
The blossomed languorous months my realm to be,
And south winds blowing from the sea?
Shall I desire
The dewy meadow
In warmth and shadow,
And oaks that sunbeams crest with tangled fire?

Ah, no! ah, no!
But close about my castle, age on age,
The starry winter for my heritage:
Ah, no! ah, no!
But lone bright mountains,
And prisoned fountains,
The enchanted silence and the roaming snow.

LOUISE IMOGEN GUINEY.

THE WINTER WALK AT NOON.

THE night was winter in its roughest mood;
The morning sharp and clear. But now at noon
Upon the southern side of the slant hills,
And where the woods fence off the northern blast,
The season smiles, resigning all its rage,
And has the warmth of May. The vault is blue
Without a cloud, and white without a speck
The dazzling splendor of the scene below.

Again the harmony comes o'er the vale,
And through the trees I view the embattled tower
Whence all the music. I again perceive
The soothing influence of the wafted strains,
And settle in soft musings as I tread
The walk, still verdant, under oaks and elms,
Whose outspread branches overarch the glade.
The roof, though movable through all its length
As the wind sways it, has yet well sufficed,
And, intercepting in their silent fall
The frequent flakes, has kept a path for me.
No noise is here, or none that hinders thought.
The redbreast warbles still, but is content
With slender notes, and more than half suppressed:
Pleased with his solitude, and flitting light
From spray to spray, where'er he rests he shakes
From many a twig the pendant drops of ice
That tinkle in the withered leaves below.
Stillness, accompanied with sounds so soft,
Charms more than silence.

WILLIAM COWPER.
The Task.

A WINTER SCENE.

THE earth is wrapped in one white dream of snow,
The crescent, like a broken shield of gold,
Lies on those purple depths where star-flowers grow,
And shines with lambent beams across the wold.

O'er far horizon-lines the mountains lift
  Their crags against the cold, unfathomed sky,
Encased with snow in many a marble drift,
  Like monuments of centuries passed by.

Through ghostly forest aisles, where not a leaf
  Flecks with its emerald green the frosty boughs,
The haunting winds with swelling tales of grief,
  The frozen trees from heavy dreams arouse.

And sudden, by the moonlight's pallid beams,
  A band of silent wolves speed through the snow;
As, over sorrow's pillow, troubled dreams
  From slumber's unknown borders come and go.

Far from a distant wilderness of woods
  The fearless owl laughs at the passing hour;
Then silence broods upon the solitudes,
  And wraps the midnight in her solemn power.

A shadow falls on all the hills around,
  And hidden is the moor's far-spreading light,
As o'er the skies, with all their stars profound,
  The clouds float by like dreamy swans of night.

The shadowy hour melts into purple day;
  And, through Aurora's fields of azure air,
The crimson stream of morning pours its way,
  And tints the snow-clad hills with colors rare.

And soon, beneath a golden atmosphere,
The twinkling crystals of the starry snow,
Like rainbow-flashing diamonds pure and clear,
For miles outspread, set all the fields aglow.

And sharp and strong the north wind fills the skies,
And sifts and smooths the downy seas of white,
Till Nature wipes the sorrow from her eyes
And smiles to see her world so fair and bright.

ERNEST WARBURTON SHURTLEFF.

O WINTER, WILT THOU NEVER GO.

O WINTER! wilt thou never, never go?
O Summer! but I weary for thy coming;
Longing once more to hear the Luggie flow,
And frugal bees laboriously humming.
Now, the east wind diseases the infirm,
And I must crouch in corners from rough weather.
Sometimes a winter sunset is a charm,
When the fired clouds, compacted, blaze together,
And the large sun dips, red, behind the hills.
I, from my window can behold this pleasure;
And the eternal moon, what time she fills
Her orb with argent, treading a soft measure,
With queenly motion of a bridal mood,
Through the white spaces of infinitude.

DAVID GRAY.
In the Shadows.

FEBRUARY IN ROME.

WHEN Roman fields are red with cyclamen,
And in the palace gardens you may find,
Under great leaves and sheltering briony-bind,
Clusters of cream-white violets, O then
The ruined city of immortal men
Must smile, a little to her fate resigned;
And through her corridors the slow warm wind
Gush harmonies beyond a mortal ken.
Such soft favonian airs upon a flute,
Such shadowy censers burning live perfume,
Shall lead the mystic city to her tomb;
Nor flowerless springs, nor autumns without fruit,
Nor summer-mornings when the winds are mute,
Trouble her soul till Rome be no more Rome.

EDMUND WILLIAM GOSSE.

A WINTER ROUNDELAY.

THE mailèd sleet is driving
Relentless through the air,
The trees, as if for shriving,
Bend low like monks at prayer.
Snow hides the cotes that harbor
The wary wrens in spring,
And round the viny arbor
The frost-elves dance and sing.

But here before the fender,
Upon my sweet guitar,
I waken memories tender
Of one who's now afar:
How I, her minstrel wooer,
Beheld her casement part,
The night I sang unto her
The hopes that thronged my heart.

Though no bright eyes embolden
My lips to loving lays,
Yet mine are visions golden,
And dreams of happier days;
For when the winds cease wailing,
And boughs bud tenderly,
My sweetheart will come sailing
Back o'er the bounding sea!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.

IN THE WINTER NO BIRDS SING.

"HARPER old, a love-song glad,
Sing of knights with maidens wed!"
But the minstrel, thinly clad,
Smiling sadly, shook his head.

"Fragrant apple blossoms blowing,
White and red, and sweet and pure,
Are the lyrics, bright and glowing
Of the youthful troubadour.

"But the frost-flakes with their glitter
White, like blossoms, but so cold,
Are the verses, vain and bitter,
Of the troubadour who's old.

"I've forgotten love-songs glad
Of the knights with maidens wed.
I am poor and thinly clad;
And the soul of music's fled."

CHARLES MINER THOMPSON.

A FLOWER.

FAIR Maid of February! — drop of snow
Enchanted to a flower, and there within
A dream of April green, — who without sin
Conceived wast, but how no man may know;
I would thou mightest, being of heavenly kin,
Pray for us all (thy lips are pure although
The soil be soaked with tears and blood), to win
Some pity somewhere for man's grievous woe.
A foolish phantasy and fond conceit!
Yet mark this little white-green bell, three-cleft,
And muse upon it. Earth is not bereft
Of miracles; lo, here is one complete:
And after this the whole new springtime left,
And all the roses that make summer sweet.

Fraser's Magazine, February, 1879.

LEAFLESS HOURS.

THE pale sun, through the spectral wood,
Gleams sparely, where I pass;
My footstep, silent as my mood,
Falls in the silent grass.

Only my shadow points before me,
Where I am moving now;
Only sad memories murmur o'er me
From every leafless bough:
And out of the nest of last year's redbreast
Is stolen the very snow.

EDWARD ROBERT BULWER-LYTTON.

SNOW SHADOWS.

EACH shining snowflake lets a shadow fall,
As to the earth it softly sinks to rest:
So, may the whitest, sweetest souls of all
Seem, sometimes, wrong, to those who know them best.

But, when the earth, awhile its ermine wearing,
Again grows bare, despite the beauty given,
Lo, a fair type of lowliest cross bearing:
The ray, that casts the shadow, lifts to heaven.

HENRY HARTSHORNE.

ON THE FRENCH EXPEDITION TO RUSSIA, FEBRUARY, 1816.

YE storms, resound the praises of your King!
And ye mild seasons — in a sunny clime,
Midway on some high hill, while Father Time
Looks on delighted — meet in festal ring,
And loud and long of Winter's triumph sing!
Sing ye, with blossoms crowned, and fruits and flowers,
Of Winter's breath surcharged with sleety showers,
And the dire flapping of his hoary wing.
Knit the blithe dance upon the soft green grass,
With feet, hands, eyes, lips, report your gain;
Whisper it to the billows of the main,
And to the aërial zephyrs as they pass,
That old decrepit Winter, — he hath slain
That host which rendered all your beauties vain!

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

THE MOTH.

WHERE for carpet lay the gaunt brown trees below
Sifted snow,
On a cruel sundown in a losing strife
Writhed a life;
Quaking pale-brown wings and tender coming breath
Fought with death.

Frail the moth and weak till warmed by heat of hand;
Closely scanned
All the horizon showed no garden summer-sweet
For his feet,
Yet undoubting, from the saviour palm upreared,
Straight he steered

Forthright to his one place in this dual world.
Winter-hurled,
Fine sleet stung him as he beat the evening late
Toward his mate
Where, by paths untrod, but O, dreamed of,
Lay his love.

CHARLES DE KAY.

FEBRUARY.

I THOUGHT the world was cold in death;
The flowers, the birds, all life was gone,
For January's bitter breath
Had slain the bloom and hushed the song.

And still the earth is cold and white,
And mead and forest yet are bare;
But there's a something in the light
That says the germ of life is there.

Deep down within the frozen brook
I hear a murmur, faint and sweet,

And lo! the ice breaks as I look,
And living waters touch my feet.

Within the forest's leafless shade
I hear a spring-bird's hopeful lay:
O life to frozen death betrayed
Thy death shall end in life to-day.

And in my still heart's frozen cell
The pulses struggle to be free;
While sweet the bird sings, who can tell
But life may bloom again for thee!

MRS. JANE [GOODWIN] AUSTIN.

THE THRUSH IN FEBRUARY.

I KNOW him, February's thrush,
And loud at eve he valentines
On sprays that paw the naked bush
Where soon will sprout the thorns and bines.

Now ere the foreign singer thrills
Our vale his plain-song pipe he pours,
A herald of his million bills;
And heed him not, the loss is yours.

My study, flanked with ivied fir
And budded beech with dry leaves curled,
Perched over yew and juniper,
He neighbors, piping to his world:

The wooded pathways dank on brown,
The branches on grey cloud a web,
The long green roller of the down
An image of the deluge-ebb:

And farther, they may hear along
The stream beneath the poplar row,
By fits, like welling rocks, the song
Spouts of a blushful Spring in flow.

But most he loves to front the vale
When waves of warm southwestern rains
Have left our heavens clear in pale,
With faintest beck of moist red veins:

Vermilion wings, by distance held
To pause aflight while fleeting swift:
And high aloft the pearl inshelled
Her lucid glow in glow will lift:

A little south of colored sky;
Directing, gravely amorous,
The human of a tender eye
Through pure celestial on us.

Remote, not alien; still, not cold;
Unraying yet, more pearl than star;
She seems awhile the vale to hold
In trance, and homelier makes the far.

The Earth her sweet unscented breathes;
An orb of lustre quits the height;
And like broad iris-flags, in wreaths
The sky takes darkness, long ere quite.

His Island voice then shall you hear,
Nor ever after separate
From such a twilight of the year
Advancing to the vernal gate.

He sings me, out of winter's throat,
The young time with the life ahead;
And my young time his leaping note
Recalls to spirit-mirth from dead.

. . . . . .

Full lasting is the song, though he,
The singer, passes: lasting too,
For souls not lent in usury,
The rapture of the forward view.

With that I bear my senses fraught
Till what I am fast shoreward drives.
They are the vessel of my Thought.
The vessel splits, the Thought survives.

Nought else are we when sailing brave
Save husks to raise and bid it burn.
Glimpse of its livingness will wave
A light the senses can discern

Across the river of the death
Their close. Meanwhile, O twilight bird
Of promise! bird of happy breath!
I hear, I would the City heard.

. . . . . .

GEORGE MEREDITH.

A VALENTINE.

(RONDEL.)

AWAKE, awake, O gracious heart,
There's some one knocking at the door:
The chilling breezes make him smart;
His little feet are tired and sore.

Arise, and welcome him before
Adown his cheeks the big tears start:
Awake, awake, O gracious heart,
There's some one knocking at the door!

'Tis Cupid come with loving art
To honor, worship, and implore;
And lest, unwelcomed, he depart
With all his wise, mysterious lore,
Awake, awake, O gracious heart,
There's some one knocking at the door!

FRANK DEMPSTER SHERMAN.
In the Century Magazine.

A HYMN TO BISHOP SAINT VALENTINE.

THE day, the only day returns,
The true *redde letter* day returns,
When summer time in winter burns;
When a February dawn
Is opened by two sleeves in lawn
Fairer than Aurora's fingers,
And a burst of all bird singers,
And a shower of *billet-doux*,
Tinging cheeks with rosy hues,
And over all a face divine,
Face good-natured, face most fine,
Face most anti-saturnine,
Even thine, yea, even thine,
Saint of sweethearts, Valentine!
See he's dawning! See he comes,
With the jewels on his thumbs
Glancing us a ruby ray
(For he's sun and all to-day),
See his lily sleeves! and now
See the mitre on his brow!
See his truly pastoral crook,
And beneath his arm his book
(Some sweet tome *De Arte Amandi*):
And his hair, 'twixt saint and *dandy*,
Lovelocks touching either cheek,
And black, though with a silver streak,
As though for age both young and old,
And his look, 'twixt meek and bold,

Bowing round on either side,
Sweetly lipped and earnest-eyed,
And lifting still to bless the land,
His very gentlemanly hand.

Hail! oh, hail! and thrice again
Hail, thou clerk of sweetest pen!
Connubialest of clergymen!
Exquisite bishop! — not at all
Like Bishop Bonner; no, nor Hall,
That gibing priest; nor Atterbury,
Although he was ingenious, very,
And wrote the verses on the "Fan;"
But then he swore, — unreverend man!
But very like good Bishop Berkeley,
Equally benign and clerkly;
Very like Rundle, Shipley, Hoadley,
And all the genial of the godly;
Like De Sales, and like De Paul;
But most, I really think of all,
Like Bishop Mant, whose sweet theology
Includeth verse and ornithology,
And like a proper rubric star,
Hath given us a new "Calendar,"
So full of flowers and birdly talking,
'Tis like an Eden bower to walk in.
Such another See is thine,
O thou Bishop Valentine;
Such another, but as big
To that, as Eden to a fig;

For all the world's thy diocese,
All the towns and all the trees,
And all the barns and villages:
The whole rising generation
Is thy loving congregation:
Enviable indeed's thy station;
Tithes cause thee no reprobation,
Dean and chapters no vexation,
Heresy's no spoilation.
Begged is thy participation;
No one wishes thee translation,
Except for some sweet explanation.
All decree thee consecration!
Beatification!
Canonization!
All cry out, with heart-prostration,
Sweet's thy text-elucidation,
Sweet, oh, sweet's thy visitation,
And Paradise thy confirmation.

JAMES HENRY LEIGH HUNT.

VALENTINE VERSES.

I SEND a sign of love; the shower sends
The breeze before it, whispering, "He is coming!"
And the glad field her leaves and flowers bends,
And hushes all her myriad insects' humming.

I send a sign of love; the morning sends
A rosy cloud, his mounted messenger;
And the glad earth in ecstasy attends,
Sure now her love himself will come to her.

O fairer than the field, than the whole earth,
Would that thy lover's coming in thy sight
Were as the rain-cloud to a land of dearth,
Were as the morning to a world of night!

FRANCIS WILLIAM BOURDILLON.

IN FEBRUARY.

LIKE mimic meteors the snow
In silence out of heaven sifts,
And wanton winds that wake and blow
Pile high their monumental drifts.

And looking through the window-panes
I see, 'mid loops and angles crossed,
The dainty geometric skeins
Drawn by the fingers of the Frost.

'Tis here at dawn where comes his love,
All eager and with smile benign,
A golden Sunbeam from above,
To read the Frost's gay valentine.

FRANK DEMPSTER SHERMAN.

LINES SUGGESTED BY THE FOURTEENTH OF FEBRUARY.

DARKNESS succeeds to twilight:
Through lattice and through skylight
The stars no doubt, if one looked out,
Might be observed to shine:
And sitting by the embers
I elevate my members
On a stray chair, and then and there
Commence a Valentine.

Yea! by Saint Valentinus,
Emma shall not be minus
What all young ladies, whate'er their grade is,
Expect to-day no doubt:
Emma the fair, the stately,
Whom I beheld so lately,
Smiling beneath the snow-white wreath
Which told that she was "out."

Wherefore fly to her, swallow,
And mention that I'd "follow,"
And "pipe and trill," et cetera, till
I died, had I but wings:
Say the North's "true and tender,"
The South an old offender;
And hint in fact, with your well-known tact,
All kinds of pretty things.

Say I grow hourly thinner,
Simply abhor my dinner,
Though I do try and absorb some viand
Each day for form's sake merely;
And ask her, when all's ended,
And I am found extended,
With vest blood-spotted and cut carotid,
To think on Her's sincerely.

CHARLES STUART CALVERLEY.

VALENTINE IN FORM OF BALLADE.

THE soft wind from the south land sped,
He set his strength to blow,
From forests where Adonis bled,
And lily flowers a-row:
He crossed the straits like streams that flow,
The ocean dark as wine,
To my true love to whisper low,
To be your Valentine.

The Spring half-raised her drowsy head,
Besprent with drifted snow,
"I'll send an April day," she said,
"To lands of wintry woe."
He came, — the winter's overthrow, —
With showers that sing and shine,

Pied daisies round your path to strow,
To be your Valentine.

Where sands of Egypt, swart and red,
'Neath suns Egyptian glow,
In places of the princely dead,
By the Nile's overflow,
The swallow preened her wings to go,
And for the North did pine,
And fain would brave the frost, her foe,
To be your Valentine.

ENVOY.

Spring, Swallow, South Wind, even so,
Their various voice combine;
But that they crave on *me* bestow,
To be your Valentine.

ANDREW LANG.

VALENTINE'S DAY, 1873.

OH! I wish I were a tiny browny bird from out the south,
Settled among the alder-holts, and twittering by the stream;
I would put my tiny tail down, and put up my tiny mouth,
And sing my tiny life away in one melodious dream.

I would sing about the blossoms, and the sunshine
and the sky,
And the tiny wife I meant to have in such a cosy
nest;
And if some one came and shot me dead, why then
I could but die,
With my tiny life and tiny song just ended at
their best.

CHARLES KINGSLEY.

FORESHADOWINGS.

WIND of the winter night,
Under the starry skies
Somewhere my lady bright,
Slumbering, lies,
Wrapped in calm maiden dreams,
Where the pale moonlight streams,
Softly she sleeps.

I do not know her face,
Pure as the lonely star
That in yon darkling space
Shineth afar;
Never with soft command
Touched I her willing hand,
Kissed I her lips.

I have not heard her voice,
I do not know her name;

Yet doth my heart rejoice,
Owning her claim;
Yet am I true to her,
All that is due to her
Sacred I keep.

Never a thought of me
Troubles her soft repose;
Courant of mine may be
Lily nor rose.
They may not bear to her
This heart's fond prayer to her,
Yet,—she is mine.

•

Wind of the winter night,
Over the fields of snow,
Over the hills so white
Tenderly blow!
Somewhere red roses bloom;
Into her warm, hushed room,
Bear thou their breath.

Whisper,—Nay, nay, thou sprite,
Breathe thou no tender word;
Wind of the winter night,
Die thou unheard.
True love shall yet prevail,
Telling its own sweet tale:
Till then I wait.

MRS. JULIA CAROLINE [RIPLEY] DORR.

WHAT MAY BE.

WHEN the days are longer, longer,
And the sun shines stronger, stronger,
And the winds cease blowing, blowing,
And the winter's chance of snowing
  Is lost in springtime weather;

And the brooks start running, running,
And the bee sits sunning, sunning,
And the birds come, bringing, bringing,
Such good news in their singing
  Of love and springtime weather;

It may be — there's no knowing —
That then, when buds are blowing,
When birds are greeting, greeting,
And all things mating, meeting,
  We two may come together,
  And find our springtime weather.

NORA PERRY.

THE SNOW LIES WHITE.

. . . . . .

THE snow lies white, and the moon gives light,
  I'll out to the freezing mere,
And ease my heart with one little song,
  For none will be nigh to hear.

And it's O my love, my love!
And it's O my dear, my dear!
It's of her that I'll sing till the wild woods ring,
When nobody's nigh to hear.

My love is young, she is young, is young;
When she laughs the dimple dips.
We walked in the wind, and her long locks blew
Till sweetly they touched my lips.
And I'll out to the freezing mere,
Where the stiff reeds whistle so low,
And I'll tell my mind to the friendly wind,
Because I have loved her so.

Ay, and she's true, my lady is true!
And that's the best of it all;
And when she blushes my heart so yearns
That tears are ready to fall.
And it's O my love, my love!
And it's O my dear, my dear!
It's of her that I'll sing till the wild woods ring,
When nobody's nigh to hear.

JEAN INGELOW.

NIGHT-WINDS IN WINTER.

WINDS! *are* they winds?—or myriad ghosts, that shriek?
Ghosts of poor mariners, drowned in northern seas,

Beside the surf-tormented Hebrides,
Whose voices now of tide-born terror speak
In tones to blanch the boldest listener's cheek?
Hark! how they thunder down the far-off leas,
Sweep the scourged hills, and smite the woodland trees,
To die where towers yon glittering mountain-peak!
A moment's stillness! Then with lustier might
Of wing and voice, these marvellous wraiths of air
Fill with dread sound the ominous heights of night.
Athwart their stormful breath the star-throngs fade:
How dimmed is Cassiopæia's radiant chair,
While Perseus droops, touched by transfiguring shade!

PAUL HAMILTON HAYNE.

A BITTER WINTER.

It was a winter such as when birds die
In the deep forests; and the fishes lie
Stiffened in the translucent ice, which makes
Even the mud and slime of the warm lakes
A wrinkled clod as hard as brick; and when,
Among their children, comfortable men
Gather about great fires, and yet feel cold:
Alas then for the homeless beggar old!

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.
Summer and Winter.

FEBRUARY.

WAN, wind-wracked month, of all the months most bare
Of outward beauty or of inward grace;
Reserved of ancient custom to efface
By sacrificial offering, whate'er
Of taint was held to be the whole year's share:
One day, at least, thy cold, gray arms embrace,
That serves to set a dimple in thy face
And by its fairness make the rest more fair:
The happy day when birds begin to woo
And win fond mates, to bless the tiny nest,
Already modeled in the tinier breast;
The happy day in which, sweetheart, for you,
A rosier tint o'erspreads this breast of mine,
Sending its message through Saint Valentine.

MRS. MARY [BARKER] DODGE.

ZERO IN THE SUN.

I.

As rail tracks shorten in the cold,
Obedient to Nature's law,
So shrinks the man of iron mould,
When these rude winds their weapons draw,—
These "eager airs" of icy breath,
Whose myriad poniards, piercing, chilling,

Seem dealing back a vengeful death,
For cuts of that proverbial shilling.

The fuel-vendors thank their stars
That Lehigh higher yet must go;
And babies cuddle close to Mars,
Because the Mercury is low;
And Sunday at the twilight hour,
Once lit by tinder flames of Venus,
My flame bewails, with visage sour,
The coldness that has come between us.

. . . . . .

I'll don my double-worsted hose;
I'll pile the grate with embers bright;
I'll read my Burns, and toast my toes,
And sing the songs the skalds indite.

. . . . . .

Drink ginger-tea as pudding thick,
Compounded in a red-hot can,
Stirred with a fire-wood toddy-stick,
And ladled with a warming-pan.

. . . . . .

ROSSITER JOHNSON.

WINTER TIME.

LATE lies the wintry sun a-bed,
A frosty, fiery sleepy-head;
Blinks but an hour or two; and then,
A blood-red orange, sets again.

Before the stars have left the skies,
At morning in the dark I rise;
And shivering in my nakedness,
By the cold candle, bathe and dress.

Close by the jolly fire I sit
To warm my frozen bones a bit;
Or with a reindeer-sled, explore
The colder countries round the door.

When to go out, my nurse doth wrap
Me in my comforter and cap;
The cold wind burns my face, and blows
Its frosty pepper up my nose.

Black are my steps on silver sod;
Thick blows my frosty breath abroad;
And tree and house, and hill and lake,
Are frosted like a wedding-cake.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.
A Child's Garden of Verses.

SLEDGE BELLS.

THE logs burn red; she lifts her head,
For sledge bells tinkle and tinkle, O lightly swung.
"Youth was a pleasant morning, but ah! to think 'tis fled,
Sae lang, lang syne," quo' her mother, "I, too, was young."

No guides there are but the North star,
And the moaning forest tossing wild arms before,
The maiden murmurs, "O sweet were yon bells afar,
And hark! hark! hark! for he cometh, he nears the door."

Swift north-lights show, and scatter and go.
How can I meet him, and smile not, on this cold shore?
Nay, I will call him, "Come in from the night and the snow,
And love, love, love in the wild wood, wander no more."

JEAN INGELOW.

PANSIES.

I SEND thee pansies while the year is young,
Yellow as sunshine, purple as the night;
Flowers of remembrance, ever fondly sung
By all the chiefest of the Sons of Light;
And if in recollection lives regret
For wasted days and dreams that were not true,
I tell thee that the "pansy freak'd with jet"
Is still the heart's-ease that the poets knew.
Take all the sweetness of a gift unsought,
And for the pansies send me back a thought.

SARAH DOUDNEY.

A WINTER PIECE.

THE time has been that these wild solitudes,
Yet beautiful as wild, were trod by me
Oftener than now; and when the ills of life
Had chafed my spirit — when the unsteady pulse
Beat with strange flutterings — I would wander forth
And seek the woods. The sunshine on my path
Was to me as a friend. The swelling hills,
The quiet dells retiring far between,
With gentle invitation to explore
Their windings, were a calm society
That talked with me and soothed me. Then the chant
Of birds, and chime of brooks, and soft caress
Of the fresh sylvan air, made me forget
The thoughts that broke my peace, and I began
To gather simples by the fountain's brink,
And lose myself in day dreams. While I stood
In Nature's loneliness, I was with one
With whom I early grew familiar, one
Who never had a frown for me, whose voice
Never rebuked me for the hours I stole
From cares I loved not, but of which the world
Deems highest, to converse with her. When shrieked
The bleak November winds, and smote the woods,
And the brown fields were herbless, and the shades,
That met above the merry rivulet,
Were spoiled, I sought, I loved them still; they seemed

Like old companions in adversity.
Still there was beauty in my walks; the brook,
Bordered with sparkling frost-work, was as gay
As with its fringe of summer flowers. Afar,
The village with its spires, the path of streams
And dim receding valleys, hid before
By interposing trees, lay visible
Through the bare grove, and my familiar haunts
Seemed new to me. Nor was I slow to come
Among them, when the clouds, from their still skirts,
Had shaken down on earth the feathery snow,
And all was white. The pure keen air abroad,
Albeit it breathed no scent of herb, nor heard
Love-call of bird nor merry hum of bee,
Was not the air of death. Bright mosses crept
Over the spotted trunks, and the close buds,
That lay along the boughs, instinct with life,
Patient, and waiting the soft breath of Spring,
Feared not the piercing spirit of the North.
The snow-bird twittered on the beechen bough,
And 'neath the hemlock, whose thick branches bent
Beneath its bright cold burden, and kept dry
A circle, on the earth, of withered leaves,
The partridge found a shelter. Through the snow
The rabbit sprang away. The lighter track
Of fox, and the raccoon's broad path, were there,
Crossing each other. From his hollow tree
The squirrel was abroad, gathering the nuts
Just fallen, that asked the winter cold and sway
Of winter blast, to shake them from their hold.

But Winter has yet brighter scenes, — he boasts
Splendors beyond what gorgeous Summer knows;
Or Autumn with his many fruits, and woods
All flushed with many hues. Come when the rains
Have glazed the snow and clothed the trees with ice,
While the slant sun of February pours
Into the bowers a flood of light. Approach!
The incrusted surface shall upbear thy steps,
And the broad arching portals of the grove
Welcome thy entering. Look! the massy trunks
Are cased in the pure crystal; each light spray,
Nodding and tinkling in the breath of heaven,
Is studded with its trembling water-drops,
That glimmer with an amethystine light.
But round the parent stem the long low boughs
Bend, in a glittering ring, and arbors hide
The glassy floor. Oh! you might deem the spot
The spacious cavern of some virgin mine,
Deep in the womb of earth — where the gems grow,
And diamonds put forth radiant rods and bud
With amethyst and topaz — and the place
Lit up, most royally, with the pure beam
That dwells in them. Or haply the vast hall
Of fairy palace, that outlasts the night,
And fades not in the glory of the sun;
Where crystal columns send forth slender shafts
And crossing arches; and fantastic aisles
Wind from the sight in brightness, and are lost
Among the crowded pillars. Raise thine eye;
Thou seest no cavern roof, no palace vault;

There the blue sky and the white drifting cloud
Look in. Again the wildered fancy dreams
Of spouting fountains, frozen as they rose,
And fixed, with all their branching jets, in air,
And all their sluices sealed. All, all is light;
Light without shade. But all shall pass away
With the next sun. From numberless vast trunks
Loosened, the crashing ice shall make a sound
Like the far roar of rivers, and the eve
Shall close o'er the brown woods as it was wont.

And it is pleasant, when the noisy streams
Are just set free, and milder suns melt off
The plashy snow, save only the firm drift
In the deep glen or the close shade of pines, —
'Tis pleasant to behold the wreaths of smoke
Roll up among the maples of the hill,
Where the shrill sound of youthful voices wakes
The shriller echo, as the clear pure lymph,
That from the wounded trees, in twinkling drops
Falls, mid the golden brightness of the morn,
Is gathered in with brimming pails, and oft,
Wielded by sturdy hands, the stroke of axe
Makes the woods ring. Along the quiet air,
Come and float calmly off the soft light clouds,
Such as you see in summer, and the winds
Scarce stir the branches. Lodged in sunny cleft,
Where the cold breezes come not, blooms alone
The little windflower, whose just opened eye
Is blue as the spring heaven it gazes at,

Startling the loiterer in the naked groves
With unexpected beauty, for the time
Of blossoms and green leaves is yet afar.
And ere it comes, the encountering winds shall oft
Muster their wrath again, and rapid clouds
Shade heaven, and bounding on the frozen earth
Shall fall their volleyed stores, rounded like hail
And white like snow, and the loud North again
Shall buffet the vexed forest in his rage.

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

TO A BIRD THAT HAUNTED THE WATERS OF LAAKEN IN WINTER.

O MELANCHOLY bird, a winter's day
Thou standest by the margin of the pool,
And, taught by God, dost thy whole being school
To patience, which all evil can allay.
God has appointed thee the fish thy prey,
And given thyself a lesson to the fool
Unthrifty, to submit to moral rule,
And his unthinking course by thee to weigh.
There need not schools nor the professor's chair,
Though these be good, true wisdom to impart:
He who has not enough for these to spare,
Of time or gold, may yet amend his heart,
And teach his soul by brooks and rivers fair,
Nature is always wise in every part.

EDWARD HOVELL-THURLOW.

A WINTER NIGHT.

How calm, how solemn, how sublime the scene!
The moon in full-orbed glory sails above,
And stars in myriads around her move,
Each looking down with watchful eye serene
On earth, which, in a snowy shroud arrayed,
And still, as if in death's embrace 'twere laid,
Saddens the spirit with its corpse-like mien:
Yet doth it charm the eye, — its gaze still hold;
Just as the face of one we loved, when cold
And pale and lovely e'en in death 'tis seen,
Will fix the mourner's eye, though trembling fears
Fill all his heart, and thickly fall his tears;
O, I could watch till morn should change the sight,
This cold, this beautiful, this mournful winter night.

MRS. ELIZABETH CLEMENTINE [DODGE] [STEDMAN] KINNEY.

ON THE WIND IN FEBRUARY.

ON the wind in February
Snowflakes float still,
Half inclined to turn to rain,
Nipping, dripping, chill.
Then the thaws swell the streams,
And swollen rivers swell the sea:
If the winter ever ends
How pleasant it will be.

CHRISTINA GEORGINA ROSSETTI.
A Year's Windfalls.

DESOLATE.

FROM the sad eaves the drip-drop of the rain!
The water washing at the latchel door;
A slow step plashing by upon the moor;
A single bleat far from the famished fold;
The clicking of an embered hearth and cold;
The rainy robin tic-tac at the pane.

"So as it is with thee
Is it with me,
So as it is and it used not to be,
With thee used not to be,
Nor me."
So singeth robin on the willow tree,
The rainy robin tic-tac at the pane.

Here in this breast all day
The fire is dim and low,
Within I care not to stay,
Without I care not to go.

A sadness ever sings
Of unforgotten things,
And the bird of love is patting at the pane;
But the wintry water deepens at the door,
And a step is plashing by upon the moor
Into the dark upon the darkening moor,
And alas, alas, the drip-drop of the rain!

SYDNEY THOMPSON DOBELL.

FEBRUARY RAIN.

O LONELY day! No sounds are heard
  Save winds and floods that downward pour,
And timid fluting of a bird,
  That pipes one low note o'er and o'er.

Before the blast the bare trees lean,
  The ragged clouds sail low and gray,
And all the wild and wintry scene
  Is but one blur of driving spray.

O day most meet for memories,
  For musing by a vacant hearth
On that which was and that which is,
  And those who walk no more on earth!

And yet this dark and dreary day
  Some brighter lesson still can bring,
For it is herald of the May,
  A faint foretoken of the spring.

Beneath the ceaseless-beating rain
  Earth's snowy shroud fast disappears,
As sorrow pressing on the brain,
  Fades in a flood of happy tears.

And thus in darkness oft is wrought,
  Through lonely days of tears and grief,
The gradual change by which is brought
  To shadowed lives some sweet relief.

CHARLES TURNER DAZEY.

FEBRUARY.

RAIN — hail — sleet — snow — But in my East
This is the time when palm-trees quicken
With flowers, wherefrom the Arabs' feast
Of amber dates will thenceforth thicken.

Female and male apart they grow;
And o'er the desert sands is wafted,
On light airs of the After-glow,
That golden dust whence fruit is grafted.

No gray reality's alloy
Your green ideal can diminish!
You have love's kiss, in all its joy,
Without love's lips, which let us finish!

EDWIN ARNOLD.

SEASONS.

THE cold winds rave on the icy river,
The leafless branches complain and shiver,
The snow clouds sweep on, to a dreary tune, —
Can these be the earth and the heavens of June?

. . . . . .

The cold wind sweeps o'er the desolate hill,
The stream is bound fast and the wolds are chill;
And by the dead flats, where the cold blasts moan,
A bent body wearily plods alone.

LEWIS MORRIS.

THE BELLS.

HEAR the sledges with their bells,
Silver bells,
What a world of merriment their melody foretells!
How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,
In the icy air of night!
While the stars that oversprinkle
All the heavens seem to twinkle
With a crystalline delight;
Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,
To the tintinnabulation that so musically wells
From the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells,
From the jingling and the tinkling of the bells.

. . . . . .

EDGAR ALLAN POE.

IN A WINTER STORM.

MY Effie, if I take you so
Upon my knee for stories brave,
This true tale first. One year ago
They broke the snow to make his grave.

The sun is hid, the wind is wild,
The sunken rocks moan east and west;
But, lovely as a little child,
He keeps blown lilies on his breast.

LOUISE IMOGEN GUINEY.

A BOOK OF NATURE.

THE Winter's a book of poems,
Sorrowful fantasies,
All pictured with empty bird-nests,
Held in the lonely trees.

The turquoise skies are the covers,
Begilt with sunbeams long,
The drifts of snow are the pages,
And the moaning winds the song.

RICHARD KENDALL MUNKITTRICK.
In The Century Magazine.

A WINTER AFTERNOON.

I STAND where in the summer I have stood,
But all is changed. There is no sight of green
Save yonder, in the stiff-branched cedar wood,
Whose dull, cold leaves are gloomy to be seen;
The little hill — great growth of grass was there,
Where careless crickets leaped and sang before —
Rusty and dead, slopes slowly down to where
Foul ice lies stranded on the slimy shore:
For the sad river with a low, dull moan,
Leaving his shore flows sullenly apart.
But I, who stand in silence here alone
Looking on these, am nothing sad at heart;
For over all there is a pure, bright sky,
Wherein the sun is shining gloriously.

ROBERT KELLEY WEEKS.

AFTERNOON IN FEBRUARY.

THE day is ending,
The night is descending;
The marsh is frozen,
  The river dead.

Through clouds like ashes
The red sun flashes
On village windows
  That glimmer red.

The snow recommences;
The buried fences
Mark no longer
  The road o'er the plain;

While through the meadows,
Like fearful shadows,
Slowly passes
  A funeral train.

The bell is pealing,
And every feeling
Within me responds
  To the dismal knell;

Shadows are trailing,
My heart is bewailing
And tolling within
  Like a funeral bell.

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

WINTER.

THE golden sunshine has fled away,
The clouds o'erhead hang heavy and gray,
The world is woefully sad to-day;

And I am thinking of you, dear, you.
The cold clay hides from the rain and dew
The tenderest heart that the world e'er knew.

Why should I think of you when the rain
Smiteth so sharply the window-pane,
And the wild winds round the old house 'plain?

You were so sweet and sunny and bright,
Ever your presence brought life and light,
And I recall you in storm and night.

When snow-shrouds hang on the corpse-cold trees,
When sharp frosts sting and the north winds freeze,
What has your memory to do with these?

O fair lost love! O love that is dead!
The pleasant days from my life are fled,
The rosy morns and the sunset red.

The light has faded from out my life,
Leaving the clouds and the stormy strife,
And the keen, sharp cold that cuts like a knife.

The days and the months how slow they glide,
Gray-robed and cold-breathed and frozen-eyed!
The summer died for me when you died.

O world of woe and of want and pain!
O heaven of clouds and storm and rain!
When shall I find my summer again?

MRS. LUCY HAMILTON [JONES] HOOPER

THE CRICKET.

LITTLE inmate, full of mirth,
Chirping on my kitchen hearth,
Wheresoe'er be thine abode
Always harbinger of good,
Pay me for thy warm retreat
With a song more soft and sweet;
In return thou shalt receive
Such a strain as I can give.

Thus thy praise shall be expressed,
Inoffensive, welcome guest!
While the rat is on the scout,
And the mouse with curious snout,
With what vermin else infest
Every dish, and spoil the best;
Frisking thus before the fire,
Thou hast all thy heart's desire.

Though in voice and shape they be
Formed as if akin to thee,
Thou surpassest, happier far,
Happiest grasshoppers that are;
Their's is but a summer's song,
Thine endures the winter long,
Unimpaired, and shrill, and clear,
Melody throughout the year.

WILLIAM COWPER.

TO A SNOWDROP.

LONE Flower, hemmed in with snows, and white as they,
But hardier far, once more I see thee bend
Thy forehead, as if fearful to offend,
Like an unbidden guest. Though day by day
Storms, sallying from the mountain-tops, waylay
The rising sun, and on the plains descend,
Yet art thou welcome, welcome as a friend
Whose zeal outruns his promise! Blue-eyed May
Shall soon behold this border thickly set
With bright jonquils, their odors lavishing
On the soft West Wind and his frolic peers;
Nor will I then thy modest grace forget,
Chaste Snowdrop, venturous harbinger of spring,
And pensive monitor of fleeting years!

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

A LEGEND OF THE SNOWDROP.

In the late winter, when the breath of spring
Had almost softened the great fields of snow,
A mother died, and, wandering to and fro,
Her sad child sought her — frightened, little thing! —
Through the drear woodland, as on timid wing
Flutters a young bird; amid bushes low
It sunk in sleep, thus losing all its woe,
With smiling lips her dear name murmuring:
No loving arms were there to hold it fast,
There were no kisses for it warm and sweet,
But snowflakes, pitying, fell like frozen tears.
Then said its angel, "Snowflakes, ye shall last
Beyond the life of snowflakes; at spring's feet
Bloom ye as flowers through all the coming years!"

MAURICE FRANCIS EGAN.

THE SNOWDROP IN THE SNOW.

O full of Faith! The Earth is rock, — the Heaven
The dome of a great palace all of ice,
Russ-built. Dull light distils through frozen skies
Thickened and gross. Cold Fancy droops her wing,
And cannot range. In winding-sheets of snow
Lies every thought of any pleasant thing.
I have forgotten the green earth; my soul
Deflowered, and lost to every summer hope,

Sad sitteth on an iceberg at the Pole;
My heart assumes the landscape of mine eyes
Moveless and white, chill blanched with hoarest rime;
The sun himself is heavy and lacks cheer
Or on the eastern hill or western slope;
The world without seems far and long ago;
To silent woods stark famished winds have driven
The last lean robin, — gibbering winds of fear!
Thou only darest to believe in spring,
Thou only smilest, Lady of the Time!
Even as the stars come up out of the sea
Thou risest from the earth. How is it down
In the dark depths? Should I delve there, O Flower,
For beauty? Shall I find the summer there
Met manifold as in an ark of peace?
And thou, a lone white dove, art thou sent forth
Upon the winter deluge? It shall cease,
But not for thee, — pierced by the ruthless North
And spent with the Evangel. In what hour
The flood abates thou wilt have closed thy wings
Forever. When the happy living things
Of the old world come forth upon the new
I know my heart shall miss thee; and the dew
Of summer twilights shall shed tears for me
— Tears liker thee, ah, purest! than mine own —
Upon thy vestal grave, O vainly fair!

Thou shouldst have noble destiny, who, like
A prophet, art shut out from kind and kin:
Who on the winter silence comest in
A still small voice. Pale Hermit of the Year,

Flower of the wilderness! oh, not for thee
The jocund playmates of the maiden spring.
For, when she danceth forth with cymbaled feet,
Waking a-sudden with great welcoming,
Each calling each, they burst from hill to dell
In answering music. But thou art a bell,
A passing bell, snow-muffled, dim and sweet.

. . . . . .

Thou art the wonder of the seasons, O
Firstborn of Beauty. As the Angel near
Gazed on that first of living things which, when
The blast that ruled since Chaos o'er the sere
Leaves of primeval palms did sweep the plain,
Clung to the new-made sod and would not drive,
So gaze I upon thee amid the reign
Of Winter.

. . . . . .

SYDNEY THOMPSON DOBELL.

THE SNOWSTORM.

THE clouds are gathering slowly; dark and vast
Appear their misty outlines to the eye,
As they advance before the moaning blast,
Obscuring all the pale, blue winter sky.
And now the feathery snowflakes slowly fly
In many a mazy circle round and round,
Like some poor bird, that, soaring far on high,
With heart convulsive feels the deadly wound,
And wings his helpless flight reluctant to the ground.

And now they faster fall, — the biting air
Is filled with crystals on their downward flight,
Wrapping the face of nature drear and bare
With one wide mantle of pure, spotless white.
The snowstorm ceases as the shades of night
Fall soft and gentle o'er a quiet world,
Which grows more lovely in the evening light,
Till in the sky night's banner hangs unfurled,
And swift and far away the gloomy clouds are hurled.

O scene of purest beauty! far and wide
O'er one unbroken, glittering expanse
On hill and plain; on each and every side
Some lovely object will enchain the glance.
Brightly the moonbeams fall, and lightly dance
Upon each crystal which reflects as clear
The silvery light, as jewels of romance
Hung in the pendant of a beauty's ear,
Who lightly nods and laughs and knows no rival near.

CHARLES TURNER DAZEY.

LONGING FOR SPRING.

DIP down upon the northern shore,
O sweet new year, delaying long:
Thou doest expectant nature wrong:
Delaying long, delay no more.

What stays thee from the clouded noons,
Thy sweetness from its proper place?
Can trouble live with April days,
Or sadness in the summer moons?

Bring orchis, bring the foxglove spire,
The little speedwell's darling blue,
Deep tulips dashed with fiery dew,
Laburnums, dropping-wells of fire.

O thou, new year, delaying long,
Delayest the sorrow in my blood,
That longs to burst a frozen bud,
And flood a fresher throat with song.

ALFRED TENNYSON.
In Memoriam.

THE SNOW-BIRD.

IN the rosy light trills the gay swallow,
The thrush, in the roses below:
The meadow lark sings in the meadow,
But the snow-bird sings in the snow.
Ah me!
Chicadee!
The snow-bird sings in the snow!

The blue martin trills in the gable,
The wren, in the gourd below;

In the elm, flutes the golden robin,
But the snow-bird sings in the snow.
Ah me!
Chicadee!
The snow-bird sings in the snow!

High wheels the gray wing of the osprey,
The wing of the sparrow drops low;
In the mist dips the wing of the robin,
And the snow-bird's wing in the snow.
Ah me!
Chicadee!
The snow-bird sings in the snow.

I love the high heart of the osprey,
The meek heart of the thrush, below,
The heart of the lark in the meadow,
And the snow-bird's heart in the snow.
But dearest to me,
Chicadee! Chicadee!
Is that true little heart in the snow.

HEZEKIAH BUTTERWORTH.

WHERE NOW THE VITAL ENERGY.

WHERE now the vital energy that moved
While summer was, the pure and subtle lymph
Through the imperceptible meandering veins
Of leaf and flower? It sleeps; and the icy touch

Of unprolific winter has impressed
A cold stagnation on the intestine tide.
But let the months go round, a few short months,
And all shall be restored. These naked shoots,
Barren as lances, among which the wind
Makes wintry music, sighing as it goes,
Shall put their graceful foliage on again,
And more aspiring, and with ampler spread,
Shall boast new charms, and more than they have lost.
Then each, in its peculiar honors clad,
Shall publish, even to the distant eye,
Its family and tribe. Laburnum, rich
In streaming gold; syringa, ivory pure;
The scentless and the scented rose; this red,
And of an humbler growth, the other tall,
And throwing up into the darkest gloom
Of neighboring cypress, or more sable yew,
Her silver globes, light as the foamy surf,
That the wind severs from the broken wave;
The lilac, various in array, now white,
Now sanguine, and her beauteous head now set
With purple spikes pyramidal, as if
Studious of ornament, yet unresolved
Which hue she most approved, she chose them all;
Copious of flowers the woodbine, pale and wan,
But well compensating her sickly looks
With never cloying odors, early and late;
Hypericum all bloom, so thick a swarm
Of flowers, like flies clothing her slender rods,

That scarce a leaf appears; mezereon too,
Though leafless, well attired, and thick beset
With blushing wreaths, investing every spray;
Althæa with the purple eye; the broom,
Yellow and bright, as bullion unalloyed,
Her blossoms; and luxuriant above all
The deep dark green of whose unvarnished leaf
Makes more conspicuous, and illumines more
The bright profusion of her scattered stars.
These have been, and these shall be in their day;
And all this uniform uncolored scene
Shall be dismantled of its fleecy load,
And flush into variety again.

WILLIAM COWPER.
The Task.

A WINTER THOUGHT.

IN bare, gnarled arms the gaunt trees take
The biting winds with many a shiver, —
Keen winds that sweep the land, and shake
In frozen furrows all the smooth sweet bosom of the river.

Bare is the land of bird and flower.
O Mother Earth! art thou forsaken
In this thy darkest, dreariest hour?
Have birds and flowers, with summer airs, their flight unkindly taken?

And but for this, that in the breast
Of winter the young spring is sleeping,
The briefest insect life were best,
And our life day by day were but a time for hopeless weeping.

But Memory, smiling through her tears,
And wild Hope, whisper unto me,
"Day crowns the springs of all the years,
And glad as thy springs were of old, thy springs again shall be."

Then fast by violet-broidered brims
The frozen river seems to run,
The trees put forth their leafy limbs
To catch the fragrance of the breeze, the warmth of May-day sun.

MARTIN J. GRIFFIN.

THE WINTER WIND.

DOWN swept the chill wind from the mountain peak,
From the snow five thousand summers old;
On open wold and hill-top bleak
It had gathered all the cold,
And whirled it like sleet on the wanderer's cheek;
It carried a shiver everywhere
From the unleafed boughs and pastures bare.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.
The Vision of Sir Launfal.

A VISION OF SPRING IN WINTER.

O TENDER time that love thinks long to see,
  Sweet foot of spring that with her footfall sows
  Late snow-like flowery leavings of the snows,
Be not too long irresolute to be!
O mother-month, where have they hidden thee?
  Out of the pale time of the flowerless rose,
I reach my heart out toward the springtime lands.
  I stretch my spirit forth to the fair hours,
    The purplest of the prime;
I lean my soul down over them, with hands
  Made wide to take the ghostly growths of flowers;
    I send my love back to the lovely time.

Where has the greenwood hid thy gracious head?
  Veiled with what visions while the gray world
      grieves,
  Or muffled with what shadows of green leaves,
With warm intangible green shadows spread
To sweeten the sweet twilight for thy bed?
  What sleep enchants thee? what delight deceives?
Where the deep dreamlike dew before the dawn
  Feels not the fingers of the sunlight yet
    Its silver web unweave,
Thy footless ghost on some unfooted lawn
  Whose air the unrisen sunbeams fear to fret
    Lives a ghost's life of daylong dawn and eve.

Sunrise it sees not, neither set of star,
  Large nightfall, nor imperial plenilune,

Nor strong sweet shape of the full-breasted noon;
But where the silver-sandaled shadows are,
Too soft for arrows of the sun to mar,
Moves with the mild gait of an ungrown moon:
Hard overhead the half-lit crescent swims,
The tender-colored night draws hardly breath,
The light is listening;
They watch the dawn of slender-shapen limbs,
Virginal, born again of doubtful death,
Chill foster-father of the weanling spring.

As sweet desire of day before the day,
As dreams of love before the true love born,
From the outer edge of winter overworn
The ghost arisen of May before the May
Takes through dim air her unawakened way,
The gracious ghost of morning risen ere morn.
With little unblown breasts and child-eyed looks
Following, the very maid, the girl-child spring,
Lifts windward her bright boughs,
Dips her light feet in warm and moving brooks,
And kindles with her own month's coloring
The fearful firstlings of the plumeless boughs.

I seek thee sleeping, and awhile I see,
Fair face that art not, how thy maiden breath
Shall put at last the deadly days to death,
And fill the fields and fire the woods with thee,
And seaward hollows where my feet would be
When heaven shall hear the word that April saith

To change the cold heart of the weary time,
To stir and soften all the time to tears,
Tears joyfuller than mirth;
As even to May's clear height the young days climb
With feet not swifter than those fair first years
Whose flowers revive not with thy flowers on earth.

I would not bid thee, though I might, give back
One good thing youth has given and borne away:
I crave not any comfort of the day
That is not, nor on time's re-trodden track
Would turn to meet the white-robed hours or black
That long since left me on their mortal way;
Nor light nor love that has been, nor the breath
That comes with morning from the sun to be,
And sets light hope on fire;
No fruit, no flower thought once too fair for death,
No flower nor hour once fallen from life's green tree,
No leaf once plucked, or once fulfilled desire.

The morning song beneath the stars that fled
With twilight through the moonless mountain air,
While youth with burning lips and wreathless hair
Sang toward the sun that was to crown his head,
Rising; the hopes that triumphed and fell dead,
The sweet swift eyes and songs of hours that were, —
These may'st thou not give back forever; these.

As at the sea's heart all her wrecks lie waste,
Lie deeper than the sea;
But flowers thou may'st, and winds, and hours of ease,
And all its April to the world thou may'st
Give back, and half my April back to me.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE.

IN FEBRUARY.

THE birds have been singing to-day
And saying: "The spring is near!
The sun is as warm as in May,
And the deep blue heavens are clear."

The little bird on the boughs
Of the sombre snow-laden pine
Thinks: "Where shall I build me my house,
And how shall I make it fine?

"For the season of snow is past;
The mild south wind is on high;
And the scent of the spring is cast
From his wing as he hurries by."

The little birds twitter and cheep
To their loves on the leafless larch:
But seven foot deep the snow-wreaths sleep,
And the year hath not worn to March.

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS.

FEBRUARY.

STILL lie the sheltering snows, undimmed and white;
And reigns the winter's pregnant silence, still:
No sign of spring, save that the catkins fill,
And willow stems grow daily red and bright.
These are the days when ancients held a rite
Of expiation for the old year's ill,
And prayer to purify the new year's will:
Fit days, — ere yet the spring rains blur the sight,
Ere yet the bounding blood grows hot with haste
And dreaming thoughts grow heavy with a greed
The ardent summer's joy to have and taste:
Fit days — to take to last year's losses heed,
To reckon clear the new life's sterner need;
Fit days — for Feast of Expiation placed!

MRS. HELEN MARIA [FISKE] [HUNT] JACKSON.

THE FROZEN RIVER.

DEAD stream beneath the icy silent blocks
That motionless stand soddening into grime,
Thy fretted falls hang numb, frost pens the locks;
Dead river, when shall be thy waking time?
"Not dead;" the river spoke and answered me,
"My burdened current, hidden, finds the sea."
"Not dead, not dead;" my heart replied at length,
"The frozen river holds a hidden strength."

MRS. AUGUSTA [DAVIES] WEBSTER.

WINTER RAIN.

EVERY valley drinks,
Every dell and hollow;
Where the kind rain sinks and sinks,
Green of spring will follow.

Yet a lapse of weeks
Buds will burst their edges,
Strip their wool-coats, glue-coats, streaks,
In the woods and hedges.

Weave a bower of love
For birds to meet each other,
Weave a canopy above
Nest and egg and mother.

But for fattening rain
We should have no flowers,
Never a bud or leaf again
But for soaking showers;

Never a mated bird
In the rocking tree-tops,
Never indeed a flock or herd
To graze upon the lea-crops.

Lambs so woolly white
Sheep the sun-bright leas on,
They could have no grass to bite
But for rain in season.

We should find no moss
In the shadiest places,
Find no waving meadow grass
Pied with broad-eyed daisies:

But miles of barren sand,
With never a son or daughter,
Not a lily on the land,
Or lily on the water.

CHRISTINA GEORGINA ROSSETTI.

DIE DOWN, O DISMAL DAY.

DIE down, O dismal day! and let me live.
And come, blue deeps! magnificently strewn
With colored clouds — large, light and fugitive —
By upper winds through pompous motions blown.
Now it is death in life, — a vapor dense
Creeps round my window till I cannot see
The far snow-shining mountains, and the glens
Shagging the mountain-tops. O God! make free
This barren, shackled earth, so deadly cold, —
Breathe gently forth Thy spring, till winter flies
In rude amazement, fearful and yet bold,
While she performs her customed charities.
I weigh the loaded hours till life is bare:
O God! for one clear day, a snowdrop, and sweet air!

DAVID GRAY.
In the Shadows.

EVANESCENCE.

OVER thy marbles shines this moon
An icicle in the sun,
A prison of fire, a palace of frost,
A miracle-world begun;
All heaven's hues in its rondure pale,
With its exquisite life undone!

Child, thine was the beauty firm and fair,
Thine, too, was the changeful glow;
So in the snow-time wert thou born,
Our winter jewel; and so,
When close on the noon, from the natal height,
Fell soft and sudden thy lone sweet light,
Again 'twas the time of the snow.

LOUISE IMOGEN GUINE

UNDER THE SNOWDRIFT.

UNDER the snowdrift the blossoms are sleeping,
Dreaming their dreams of sunshine and June,
Down in the hush of their quiet they're keeping
Thrills from the throstle's wild summer-swung tune

Under the snowdrifts what blossoms are sleeping
Never to waken with sunshine or June!
Do they dream dreams of the eyes that are weepin
Under the snowdrift, by midnight and noon?

MRS. HARRIET ELIZABETH [PRESCOTT] SPOFFO

WHEN SPRINGTIDE COMES.

YOUR change draws near, O changeless pall of grey!
Thou dull brown plain, ye silent woods and sere!
Heaven will be blue and earth be green and gay,
And bird and beast be joyous, and life be dear,
When springtide comes.

Far o'er the fields will sound the new lamb's bleat;
The lark will mount his topmost stair of song;
From high elm-boughs the treble and tenor sweet
Of thrush and blackbird mingle all day long.

The woodbine branch will dart its wingéd sprays;
The palm-gold rend its casket; whorl by whorl
Her fragile ladder will the cleaver raise;
The arum-scroll will silently unfurl.

And soon from woody coverts, and beds of grass,
Arrayed in vestments all of delicate hue,
Meet for the court of the maiden year, will pass
Troops of white flowers and yellow, pink and blue.

The shy windflower will nestle 'neath the trees;
Primrose and violet haunt the mossy bank;
Cowslip and king-cup spread o'er the downs and leas,
Robin and lady-smock o'er meadows dank.

The limes will redden and the oaks embrown;
To chestnut-buds a glistening dew will rise:

The feathering alders to the lake stoop down;
The virgin hazels ope their crimson eyes.

And then, watch howso patiently we may,
A touch eludes our ken. The beechen tops
To-day are golden, willow-wands are grey;
To morrow a green cloud enfolds the copse.

And if perchance an ice-breath from the North,
Or marsh-air tainted with the Orient's guile,
Smite leaf and blossom brought untimely forth,
The sun will rise and heal them with a smile.

Anon from the south will stream a gentle blast
And bid the jewelled cones of the larches flash,
From the rough oak woo tender shoots, and last
Unclench the rigid fingers of the ash.

With field and wood thus bathed in clear green light,
And ringing with bird-voices night and day,
Dells hyacinth-blue and hedges hawthorn-white,
Will God's glad earth renew herself in May.

And ye, O torpid fancy and dull heart!
Fettered and chilled in winter's prison so long,
Will not the touch of sunshine make ye start,
Put on new plumes and tune a fresher song,
When springtide comes?

HENRY G. HEWLETT.

THE SNOWSTORM.

THE morning skies are dull and streaked with gray;
And silently upon the frosty air
The scattered snowflakes flutter here and there,
And skip and dance like fairies in their play,
Poising awhile, then frolicking away.
Noon comes, and lo! the hills, that were so bare,
Are robed in dazzling garments, pure and fair;
The trees seem blossoming in some strange way;
And when once more the air towards evening clears,
And when the fleecy shower of white subsides,
A wondrous transformation then appears!
The barren ground from sight so closely hides
Beneath that stainless spread, it almost seems
As though we gaze upon the land of dreams!

ERNEST WARBURTON SHURTLEFF.

THE SNOWDROP.

THE first flower of the infant year,
Through kindred snows that springeth,
Though gemmed with many a frozen tear,
Is to my musing soul more dear
Than all that gay June bringeth,
When blossomed brier and rosy flowers
Look bright in summer sun and showers.

For this lone child of wintry air,
Midst adverse storms appearing,

Resembleth spirits, sweet and fair,
Who, in this world of grief and care,
  Its bitter woes are cheering;
Serene amidst its ceaseless strife,
And smiling on the ills of life.

Like them thou meekly art, pale flower,
  The tempest's warfare meeting;
Although the rude winds shake thy bower,
And on thy form, with ruthless power,
  The icy storms are beating,
Yet, still thy oft crushed buds we see
Retain their spotless purity.

And their first pledge of coming spring,
  The new-born year revealeth,
Shall thoughts of tenderer interest bring
Than all she from her lap shall fling,
  When summer suns she feeleth;
For, thou dost from her leafless breast
Look forth and promise all the rest.

AGNES STRICKLAND.

SAFE.

WILD wintry wind, storm through the night,
  Dash the black clouds against the sky,
Hiss through the billows seething white,
  Fling the rock-surf in spray on high.

Hurl the high seas on harbor bars,
  Madden them with thy havoc-shriek
Against the crimson beacon-stars, —
  Thy rage no more can make me weak.

The ship rides safely in the bay,
  The ship that held my hope in her:
Whirl on, wild wind, in thy wild fray,
  We hear our whispers through the stir.

MRS. AUGUSTA [DAVIES] WEBSTER.

LAKE CAYUGA IN WINTER.

THY cold, unmovéd face, severely fair,
  Responds no more to the sun's loving glance;
Thy summer life is chilled by winter's air;
  The jealous frost-king holds thee locked in trance.

Yet I have seen thee, on a July day,
  Sparkling and flashing in the heat of noon,
Or stretching blue and sea-like, far away,
  'Neath the illusion of a summer moon.

And when the storms have fretted thee too long,
  Have I not seen thy white waves dash ashore,
Voicing a wild, defying battle-song,
  That rose above the roused wind's angry roar?

ow thou'rt like a thing without a heart,
te-stretching, like the ice-ghost of a lake:

The cold hath stricken thee, even as a dart;
Thou art so dead thou never canst awake!

But a voice answers, "When the spring winds come,
And comes the sun with his own golden key,
I shall awaken at the gathering hum
Of the birds flying over, calling me!"

And like the frozen lake is many a heart
That seems fast-locked in a strange, living death:
It will awaken with a throbbing start
When blown upon by Love's sweet summer breath!

MRS. LAURA CATHERINE [REDDEN] SEARING.

ON RECEIVING A PLAQUE OF APPLE-BLOOMS.

(IN WINTER.)

For me these apple-blossoms bloom,
Fair May flowers in this time of snow.
(How fragrant was the sweet perfume
Of those rare buds of long ago!)
You are the saint that made them blow,
That wrought the miracle of time,
And, for your pinky blooms a-row,
Accept this tiny flower of rhyme.

CLINTON SCOLLARD.

THE FROST INCREASED.

. . . THE frost increased, and the thin snow
From off the iron ground the wind did blow,
And in the cold, dark stream, from either bank
The ice stretched forth; at last, ere the sun sank,
One bitter day, low grew the clouds and dun
A little northward of the setting sun,
Wherefrom, at nightfall, sprung a furious blast,
That ere the middle of the night was past,
Brought up the snow from some untrodden land.

. . . . . .

So, 'mid the many changes of the night,
The silent snow fell till the world was white,
And to those southland folk enfrapped, forlorn
The waking was upon the morrow morn.

. . . . . .

Most pitiless and stark the winter grew
Meanwhile, beneath a sky of cloudless blue,
And sun that warmed not, till they nigh forgot
The green lush spring, the summer rich and hot,
The autumn fragrant with slow-ripening fruit;
Till each grew listless, dull to the heart's root;
For day passed day and yet no change they saw
In the white sparkling plain without a flaw,
No cloud, no change within the sunny sky,
Or in the wind, that rose at noon, to die
Before the sunset, and no change at all
In the drear silence of the dead nightfall.

WILLIAM MORRIS.
The Life and Death of Jason.

TIS THE WORLD'S WINTER.

'Tis the world's winter;
Autumn and summer
Are gone long ago.
Earth is dry to the centre,
But spring, a new comer,
A spring rich and strange,
Shall make the winds blow
Round and round,
Through and through,
Here and there,
Till the air
And the ground
Shall be filled with life anew.

ALFRED TENNYSON.
Nothing Will Die.

THE FLOWERS TO COME.

The drift is in the hollows of the hill,
Yet primrose leaves uncurl beneath the hedge;
Frosts pierce the down, and the north wind blows chill,
Yet snowdrop spikelets rim the garden edge.
Dear plants that will make bud in coming spring,
Ye were not for one only blossoming:
More than one blossoming for all fair flowers;
And God keeps mine till spring is somewhere ours.

MRS. AUGUSTA [DAVIES] WEBSTER.

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ONE SWALLOW.

We are very glad to-day and lift our praises,
For, with eyes that looked out anxiously,
While the cutting wind blew sharp against our faces,
This one swallow did we see.

O thou blessed swallow, matter not thou reach us
Travel-faint and tired, with draggled plumage wet;
Through the winter-awe thou comest now to teach us
Of a spring we know not yet.

Yes, to-day has set us free from that oppressive
Going softly we had kept so very long,
And we loose the strain of newborn joy excessive
In a rain of tears and song.

But "*One Swallow does not make a Summer*," say ye,
"Earth in dreary twilight lieth veiled as yet;
Many a weary wind must blow its blast ere may ye
Seek the nascent violet."

Would ye quench with that drear adage joy that quickens
In a triumph through our whole lives once again;
Till the spirit, shorn of comfort, quails and sickens
For your biting frost and rain?

Nay, ye cannot take our holy joyance from us;
Nay, ye cannot make the anointed eyesight dim

Of the trustful eyes that waited God's good promise
Which they had received of him.

Ye have only seen to-day one swallow flying
From the sunny southern land where Summer is;
But we know they come in flights with that undying
Summer greater far than this.

O the beauty and the joy that passeth telling!
O the time of singing birds that soon shall come,
When the trees put forth their leaves of fairest smelling,
And the brooks no more are dumb.

O we take the blessed guerdon none receiveth
Save whose soul 'gainst doubting's bitter breath can prove
That sweet grace which all things hopeth and believeth,
Not credulity, but love.

EMILY HENRIETTA HICKEY.

THE RETURN OF THE BIRDS.

I HEAR from many a little throat,
A warble interrupted long;
I hear the robin's flute-like note,
The bluebird's slenderer song.

Brown meadows and the russet hill,
  Not yet the haunt of grazing herds,
And thickets by the glimmering rill,
  Are all alive with birds.

O choir of spring, why come so soon?
  On leafless grove and herbless lawn
Warm lie the yellow beams of noon;
  Yet winter is not gone.

For frost shall sheet the pools again;
  Again the blustering East shall blow,
Whirl a white tempest through the glen,
  And load the pines with snow.

. . . . . .

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

SNOWDROPS — CONSOLATION.

A SMALL bird twitters on a leafless spray,
  Across the snow-waste breaks a gleam of gold:
What token can I give my friend to-day
  But February blossoms, pure and cold?
Frail gifts from Nature's half-reluctant hand,
  What if he deems them meaningless and pale?
I see the signs of spring about the land,
  I hear in dreams the cuckoo's summer tale;
And these chill snowdrops, fresh from wintry bowers,
Are the forerunners of a world of flowers.

SARAH DOUDNEY.

ROBBER BLUEBACK.

THOUGH it lacks two months of May
  Frosts have nipped a genial thaw
And the melted snow is thin
  Crisp and harsh to Renard's claw.
White are curves where paths have been
  Winding through the ruddy swamp,
Pensive-gray the circling trees
  Etch the sky in gentle pomp.
Yet is spring within the breeze,
  Gay in heart of yonder fowl
  Screaming near a brooding owl
    His *jay—jay—jay!*

Wicked dandy, have you come
  Dressed in suit of brightest blue
Long among our hills to roam
  Till the woods your presence rue?
Malice sure your notes betray
While you flirt about each gray
  Brushy top and chestnut crest
Jotting down in thievish brain
  Just the lay of every nest;
So when summer's here again—
  Suck the eggs—away you fly
  With the parent-frighting cry
    Of *jay—jay—jay!*

Ah the dainty rascal jay!
  Now's the time abroad to fling

With the heart and limbs of youth
  Ere the fickle minded spring
All the land with lakes endu'th!
Now across the oak-swamp race
Following swift his airy trace;
Hound him down the icy path
Till he chatters full of wrath;
  Chase him past the helpless owl
  And loudly mock the coward fowl
    With *jay—jay—jay!*

CHARLES DE KAY.

MIDNIGHT.

BENEATH a midnight moon a world of snow
  Sleeps in a deathly calm. A wistful breeze
  Searches in vain among the lifeless trees
For the soft whisper it was wont to know.
The last sere leaf was buried long ago,
  The last bird far away o'er summer seas.
  Return, O wind, to the forsaken leas,
Nor grieve the branches with thy wailings low!
And where art thou, my River! at my feet
  Thou liest breathless, on a shrouded bed.
A sculptured current, all thy voices sweet
  In cold and pulseless slumber quieted.
No? still thy great heart throbs with sluggish beat?
  So would my life go on if song were dead!

MRS. FRANCES [LAUGHTON] MACE.

UNDER THE SNOWS.

UNDER the drifted snows, with weeping and holy rite,
For a little maid's repose let the lonely bed be dight.
Cold is the cradle cover our pitiful hands fold over
The heart that had won repose or ever it knew delight.

High are the heavens and steep to us who would enter in
By the fasts that our faint hearts keep and the thorn-set crowns we win.
Sweetly the child awaketh, brightly the day-dawn breaketh
On the eyes that fell asleep or ever they looked on sin.

KATHARINE LEE BATES.

ICE.

THE ice that binds the brooklet
Is thinner than you think;
The sun shines warm upon it,
And sooner than you think,
Gurgling, sweet it answers,
"Come, dry lips, and drink!"

GEORGE WASHINGTON WRIGHT HOUGHTON.

THE MELTING OF THE SNOW.

A SOUND of streamlets flowing, flowing;
A cry of winds so bleakly blowing;
A stir, a tumult ever growing;
Deep night; and the Great Snow was going.

Underneath her death-shroud thick,
Like a body buried quick,
Heaved the Earth, and thrusting hands
Cracked the ice and brake her bands.
Heaven, with face of watery woe,
Watched the resurrection grow.
All the night, bent to be free,
In a sickening agony,
Struggled Earth. With silent tread
From his cold seat at her head
Rose the Frost, and northward stole
To his cavern near the pole.
When the bloodshot eyes of Morn
Opened in the east forlorn,
'Twas a dreary sight to see
Blotted waste and watery lea,
All the beautiful white plains
Blurred with blackening seams and stains,
All the sides of every hill
Scarred with thaw and dripping chill,
All the cold sky scowling black
O'er the soaking country track;
There's a sobbing everywhere
In the miserable air,

And a thick fog brooding low
O'er the black trail of the snow;
While the Earth, amid the gloom
Still half buried in her tomb,
Swooning lay, and could not rise,
With dark film upon her eyes.

. . . . . .

So the snow had nearly fled,
And upon her dying bed
Earth was quickening; damp and chill
Streamed the fog on vale and hill.
Like a shiny crocodile
Weltering on banks o' Nile,
Everywhere, with muddy maw,
Crawled the miserable Thaw.
On the pond and on the stream
Loosened lights began to gleam,
And before the snow could fleet
Drizzly rains began to beat.

Here and there upon the plain,
'Mid the pools of thaw and rain,
Lingered in the dismal light
Patches of unmelted white.
As these melted, very slowly,
In a quiet melancholy,
Vacant gleams o' the clouded blue
Through the dismal daylight flew,
And the wind, with a shrill clang,
Went into the west, and sang.

A sound of waters ever flowing;
A stir, a tumult, ever growing;
A gleam o' the blue, a west wind blowing;
Warmth, and the last snow wreath was going.

ROBERT WILLIAMS BUCHANAN.
White Rose and Red.

EXPECTATION.

(RONDEAU.)

WHEN flower-time comes and all the woods are gay,
When linnets chirrup and the soft winds blow,
Adown the winding river I will row,
And watch the merry maidens tossing hay,
And troops of children shouting in their play,

And with my thin oars flout the fallen snow
Of heavy hawthorn-blossom as I go:
And shall I see my love at full of day
When flower-time comes?

Ah, yes! for by the border of the stream
She binds red roses to a trim alcove,
And I shall fade into her summer-dream
Of musing upon love, — nay, even seem
To be myself the very god of love
When flower-time comes!

EDMUND WILLIAM GOSSE.

ON A WARM DAY NEAR THE CLOSE OF WINTER.

How soft this southern gale! Its freshness falls
Upon my forehead like the light, warm touch
Of the dew-lips of springtime. It has been
In the far clime of blossoms, and it bears
A message of affection to our woods,
And vales and streams. Spring, with her rose-air breath,
Is coming now upon her rainbow wing,
To waken the green earth to life and joy,
And the free air to music. She will weave
Her violet throne upon a thin, white cloud,
Soft floating in the middle-air, and call
Upon her thousand votaries to hail
Her coming with a song and smile. The waves
Will shout from rock and mountain, the blue lakes
Will tremble like the plumage of a dove
In the new gush of sunlight, and the birds
Will breathe their loves in music, and float off,
A shower of blossoms, in the atmosphere.
The young, gay leaves will weave their twilight hues
In grove and forest; 'mid yon budding isles
The sea will sleep like a Circassian bride
Decked with her richest jewelry; the sky
Will take a bluer tint, and seem to arch
More high and pure and beautiful above,
As if to let the spirit go abroad
In ampler journeyings; and a deep spell

Of life and bliss will, like a blessing, rest
Upon the waking heart, and bid it float
Like a young flower upon the buoyant wave
Of beautiful imaginings of Heaven.

GEORGE DENNISON PRENTICE.

EXPECTATION.

WIDE wintry fields left bare to skies unkind,
Brown stubble, yellow stream and thin gray grass,
Soiled streaks of snow on yonder hillside pass,
A landscape colorless, a wet chill wind,
Clear tinkle of slow-dropping icicles,
Full-throated brooks whose querulous brawling swells
To noise unwonted, roughened with the thaw.
Thick February mists cling heavily
To the dead earth and to each leafless tree,
And closer down upon the hilltops draw,
Dull forecasts there of bright, sure-coming spring;
Yet the heart gathers hope and strange delight
From this the dear, unlovely, wished-for sight
Of leaden-misted twilights lengthening.
Beyond the moist, mirk curtain weighing down,
From dark gray heaven unto dark earth brown,
Youth sees afar, with close-drawn eyelids, May,
Long vistas of all beauty, golden dells,
And clouds wherein the very sunshine dwells;
And that rich promise shortens the short day.

. . . . . .

EMMA LAZARUS.

THE WINTER RAIN.

THE rain comes down, it comes without our call,
Each pattering drop knows well its destined place,
And soon the fields whereon the blessings fall
Shall change their frosty look for Spring's sweet face;
So fall the words thy Holy Spirit sends,
Upon the heart where Winter's robe is flung;
They shall go forth as certain of their ends,
As the wet drops from out thy vapors wrung:
Spring will not tarry, though more late its rose
Shall bud and bloom upon the sinful heart;
Yet when it buds, forever there it blows,
And hears no Winter bid its bloom depart;
It strengthens with his storms, and grows more bright
When o'er the earth is cast his mantle white.

JONES VERY.

AFTER THE WINTER RAIN.

AFTER the winter rain,
Sing, robin! sing, swallow!
Grasses are in the lane,
Buds and flowers will follow.

Woods shall ring, blithe and gay,
With bird- trill and twitter,

Though the skies weep to-day
And the winds are bitter.

Though deep call unto deep
As calls the thunder,
And white the billows leap
The tempest under;

Softly the waves shall come
Up the long, bright beaches,
With dainty flowers of foam
And tenderest speeches.

After the wintry pain,
And the long, long sorrow,
Sing, heart! for thee again
Joy comes with the morrow.

INA DONNA COOLBRITH.

WAITING.

THE sunbeams slant along the snow;
It is a day of days:
O magic of those lands below,
How long the spring delays!
Hast thou detained her on the shore
Where bloom Love's lilies ever more?

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS.

THE GRASSHOPPER AND THE CRICKET.

THE poetry of earth is never dead:
When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead.
That is the grasshopper's — he takes the lead
In summer luxury — he has never done
With his delights, for when tired out with fun,
He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.
The poetry of earth is ceasing never:
On a lone winter evening, when the frost
Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills
The cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,
And seems to one in drowsiness half-lost,
The grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

JOHN KEATS.

THE LAST SNOW OF WINTER.

SOFT snow still rests within this wayside cleft,
Veiling the primrose buds not yet unfurled;
Last trace of dreary winter, idly left
On beds of moss, and sere leaves crisply curled;
Why does it linger while the violets blow,
And sweet things grow?

A relic of long nights and weary days,
When all fair things were hidden from my sight;

A chill reminder of those mournful ways
I traversed when the fields were cold and white;
My life was dim, my hopes lay still and low
Beneath the snow.

Now spring is coming, and my buried love
Breaks fresh and strong and living through the sod;
The lark sings loudly in the blue above,
The budding earth must magnify her God;
Let the old sorrows and old errors go
With the last snow.

SARAH DOUDNEY.

FEBRUARY THAW.

THE change has come at last, and from the west
Drives on the wind, and gives the clouds no rest,
And ruffles up the water thin that lies
Over the surface of the thawing ice;
Sunrise and sunset with no glorious show
Are seen, as late they were across the snow;
The wet-lipped west wind chilleth to the bone
More than the light and flickering east hath done.
More soberly the earth's fresh hope begins,
Nor stays to think of what each new day wins:
And still it seems to bid us turn away
From this chill thaw to dream of blossomed May.

WILLIAM MORRIS.
The Earthly Paradise.

FEBRUARY.

THE time when skies are free from cloud,
Though still the robin whistles loud
In the bare garden croft,
The catkin, on the hazel tree,
Mistakes for summer flower the bee,
And round it hovers oft.

Winter's last sigh, from frozen north,
Withers the flower that ventures forth;
And there is wanting still
The unseen warmth, the mellow note
Of the wild bird with dappled coat,
Though faster flows the rill.

When, from his winter home, the snake
Creeps stealthy through the withered brake,
And thoughtless of the past,
The young leaves open overhead,
Though still their fathers, sere and dead,
Are hurried by the blast.

. . . . . .

GEORGE WALTER THORNBURY.

SNOW-BLOOM.

WHERE does the snow go,
So white on the ground?
Under May's azure
No flake can be found.

Look into the lily
  Some sweet summer hour;
There blooms the snow
  In the heart of the flower.

Where does the love go,
  Frozen to grief?
Along the heart's fibres
  Its cold thrill is brief.
The snowfall of sorrow
  Turns not to dry dust;
It lives in white blossoms
  Of patience and trust.

LUCY LARCOM.

LATE FEBRUARY.

LATE February days; and now, at last,
Might you have thought that winter's woe was past;
So fair the sky was, and so soft the air.
The happy birds were hurrying here and there,
As something soon would happen. Reddened now
The hedges, and in gardens many a bough
Was overbold of buds. Sweet days, indeed,
Although past road and bridge, through wood and mead,
Swift ran the brown stream, swirling by the grass,
And in the hillside hollows snow yet was.

WILLIAM MORRIS.
The Earthly Paradise.

VOID SPRING.

THIS placid day, here at the Winter's end,
This day of temperate sunshine and mild air,
Filled with high promise of glad things and fair,
Is unto me like some dear, chosen friend
Loved well by twain whose two lives might not blend
Because Death called the worshipped woman where
Is no delight in love or love's sweet care,
Where neither prayers nor songs nor sighs ascend.
If any comfort to the lover's heart
Yields the dear friend who holds so much of her
At whose light footfall he no more shall start,
Such comfort to my soul these hours impart;
I greet of Spring the Spring-like harbinger,
Knowing with me Spring's self may not confer.

PHILIP BOURKE MARSTON.

LATE WINTER.

ALL Nature seems at work. Slugs leave their lair;
The bees are stirring; birds are on the wing:
And Winter shuddering in the open air,
Wears on his smiling face a dream of Spring.

. . . . . .

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE.

O SOFT SPRING AIRS.

COME up, come up, O soft spring airs,
  Come from your silver shining seas,
Where all day long you toss the wave
  About the low and palm-plumed keys!

Forsake the spicy lemon groves,
  The balms and blisses of the south,
And blow across the longing land
  The breath of your delicious mouth.

Come from the almond bough you stir,
  The myrtle thicket where you sigh;
Oh, leave the nightingale, for here
  The robin whistles far and nigh!

For here the violet in the wood
  Thrills with the fulness you shall take,
And wrapped away from life and love
  The wildrose dreams, and fain would wake.

For here in reed and rush and grass,
  And tiptoe in the dusk and dew,
Each sod of the brown earth aspires
  To meet the sun, the sun and you.

Then come, O fresh spring airs, once more
  Create the old delightful things,
And woo the frozen world again
  With hints of heaven upon your wings.

MRS. HARRIET ELIZABETH [PRESCOTT] SPOFFORD.

FAREWELL AND HAIL.

FAREWELL to ceaseless snowing
And winter garbed in gray!
Too long his chains have bound us,
We'll fling them from around us
And gleeful hail his going
With ringing roundelay:
Farewell to ceaseless snowing
And winter garbed in gray!

Away with pallid pining
And sorrowing that's vain!
Soon skies will smile above us
And tender lilies love us,
And warmer suns be shining
Upon the amber grain:
Away with pallid pining
And sorrowing that's vain!

We'll dream that pain is over
And grief that wastes and wears;
We'll roam the fields with Dian,
Or hunt with bold Orion,
Or play the reckless rover
Where quivered Cupid fares:
We'll dream that pain is over
And grief that wastes and wears!

We'll lie amid the rushes
And tune a pipe with Pan;

We'll sport with fays and fairies,
Whose green-embowered lair is
Where thicket-loving thrushes
Make melody for man:
We'll lie amid the rushes
And tune a pipe with Pan!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.

L'ENVOI.

As some dear friend to other climes departing,
Holding the hands of one he loveth well,
Looks in his eyes while silent tears are starting,
And without words they breathe a mute farewell,

So ere the Spring across the mountains flying
Wakes the gray earth from silence and repose,
Let us draw near the hoary monarch dying,
And bid good-bye to Winter ere he goes.

Think when he came, his royal robes around him,
Grand in his strength and glorious in his might,
Minstrel and bard with song and welcome crowned him,
And shall he go without a word to-night?

Then was he strange, — no single grief or pleasure
Bound to our lives his presence like a spell;
Now, when he holds our memory's dearest treasure,
Shall we forget to bless and say farewell?

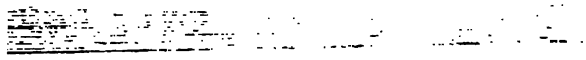
Nay! for though fast the Future's ties may bind us,
Fair with the light her witcheries may cast,
She cannot hide the tender gloom behind us,
She cannot hush the whispers of the Past.

Yet as we bend to pluck the opening flowers,
We'll think of one, though faded, all more dear,
And while we touch glad chords in joyous hours,
Some broken echo sweeter still we hear.

For in life's paths of honor and of duty
Each day fulfills the promise last,
He best may hope to win the Future's beauty,
Who best has kept the treasures of the Past.

So ere the Spring across the mountains flying
Wakes the grim earth from silence and repose,
Let us draw near the hoary monarch dying,
And say farewell to Winter ere he goes.

MRS. MARY ELIZABETH [MCGRATH] BLAKE.



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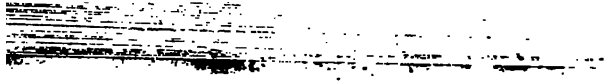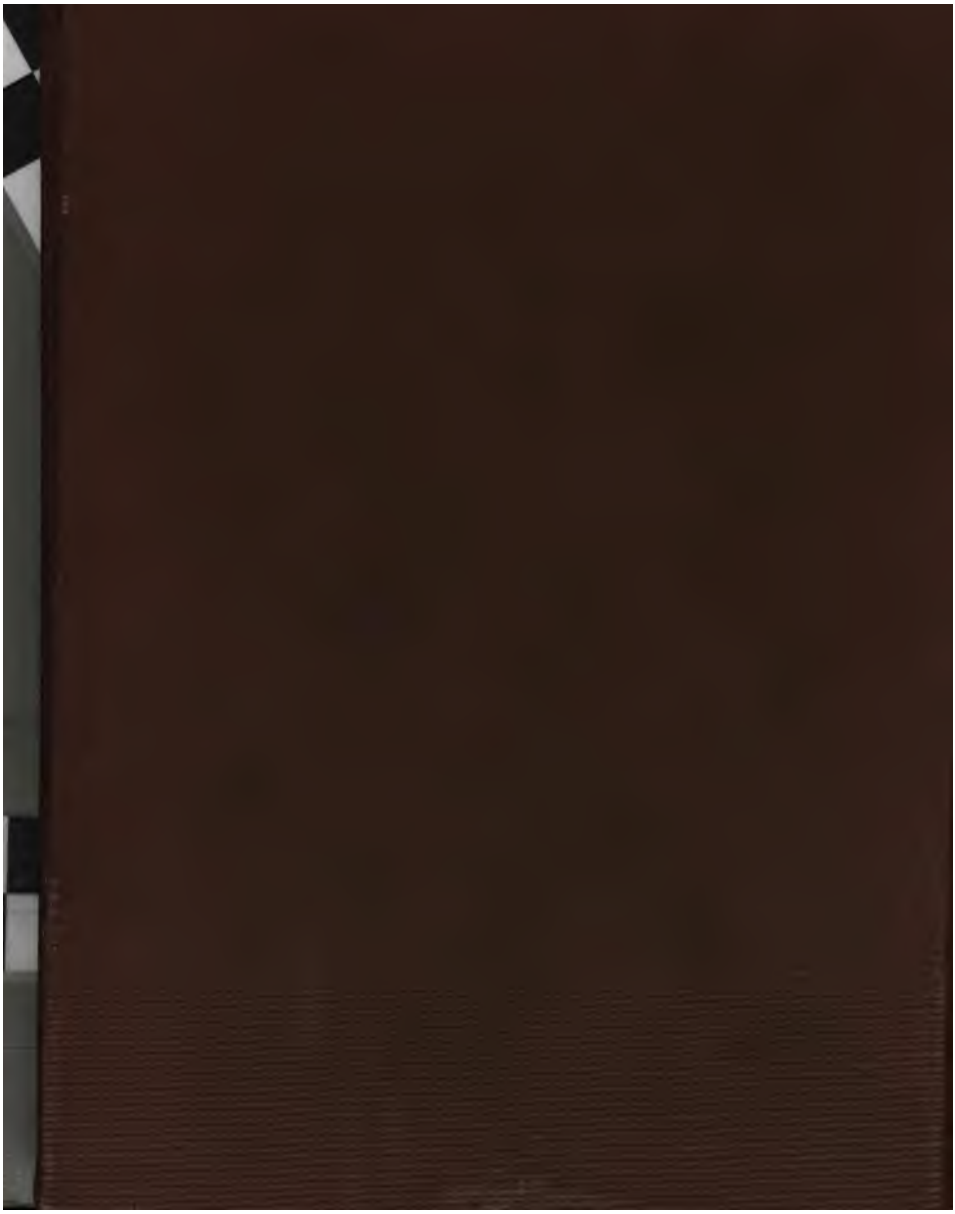
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